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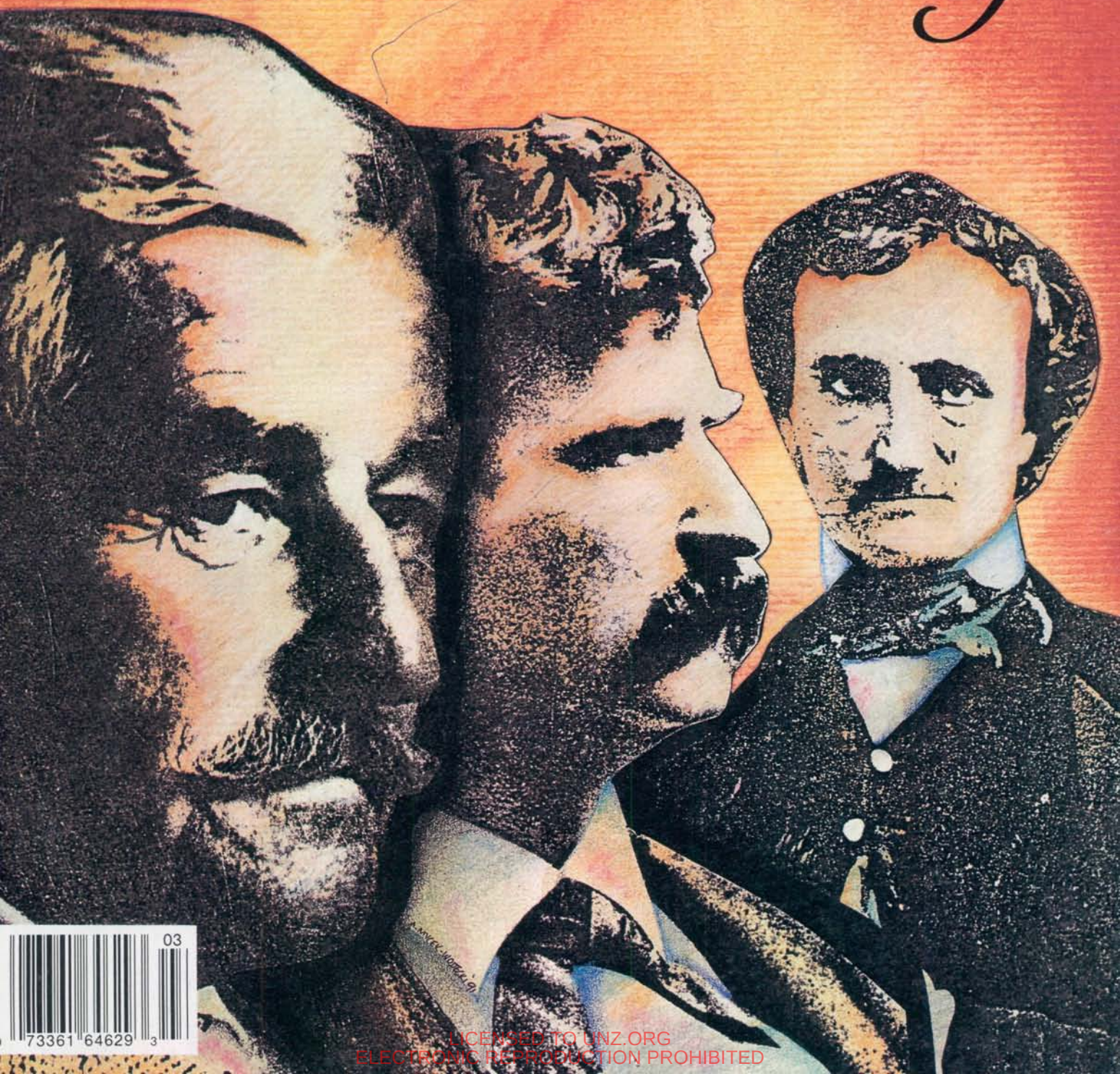

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Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

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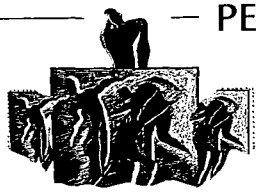

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Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE
Vol. 15, No. 3 March 1991

On 'Unfortunate Majorities'

What was Wayne Lutton's unregenerate review of the Ehrlichs' hysterical *Population Explosion* doing in the December issue (or any issue) of *Chronicles*? So it's the local Bureau of Baby Banning that calls on me and drags me off to have a coercive abortion instead of the Global Bureau of Baby Banning. Big deal. If he's against such measures, it sure would have been nice to hear him say so instead of giving mixed messages about "deal[ing with population problems] at the local and national level."

Mr. Lutton ought to have read Jacqueline Kasun's *The War Against Population* before writing his review. Our population problems, such as they are, are caused by a) too many cars, b) too many bureaucrats, and c) too many unrestrained criminals. New York City would be a great place to live, even with the cars, were it not for b and c. Furthermore, *Chronicles* is supposed to be a magazine of American culture, and America is not overpopulated (a point the baby banners continually overlook). Perhaps Jane Greer ought to invite Mr. Lutton to North Dakota so he can discover this basic truth for himself.

The whole point of the Ehrlichs' two jeremiads is to make hatred of babies socially fashionable. All ills are to be blamed on babies, not on the adults who opted for too many cars, too many bureaucrats, and a lax criminal code. This is the application the vast majority of readers get from his sermons. I deal with the fallout every day, as couples write me letters bemoaning the sterilization into which their friends and families coerced them. This is not enough to please the Ehrlichs, though, who would prefer that *all* of us were sterilized after having one or two children at most. (Actually, heavy-duty population bombers say they'd like to reduce the world's population by anything from 60 percent to 99.5 percent. Think about that for a minute.)

The Ehrlichs' facts are wrong, their predictions have always been wrong, and their solutions are insane. Lutton may have something better to offer, but he didn't tell us what it was. Meanwhile, he missed the point, which is that you can't keep more people happy and fed by banning babies and throwing bureaucrats at their parents. When will they ever learn?

—*Mary Pride*
Fenton, MO

Mr. Lutton Replies:

A conscientious reading of "Unfortunate Majorities" reveals that I did not shower "unregenerate" praise on *The Population Explosion*, but instead tempered my appreciation for their discussion of how population pressures contribute to various environmental, economic, and social problems with reservations about how these issues are best dealt with. To assert, as Mrs. Pride does, that all the "Ehrlichs' facts are wrong" is an amazing statement betraying a profound unwillingness to face what are, for some people, uncomfortable issues. Population pressure is clearly *a* causal factor in many of our problems.

The United States is not now threatened with imminent mass starvation. But we are seeing symptoms of overpopulation in the form of water shortages, pollution (breathable air is in short supply in many areas), and the emergence of Third World diseases. (North Dakota is probably "carrying" about as many people as can make a living there.) "Unfortunately," as Garrett Hardin reminds us, "it is difficult to believe in bad news until ruin is fully upon us."

As Edward O. Wilson noted in the August *Chronicles*, some conservatives continue to regard environmental and population matters "with skepticism or outright hostility." One who falls into this category is Jacqueline Kasun, whose book, *The War Against Population*, I discussed at some length in

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National Review. Kasun, a disciple of Julian Simon, parrots the "What, Me Worry?" line championed by Simon and Ben Wattenberg.

I wish that I could recommend an intelligent, comprehensive treatment of environmental and population issues written by a conservative. But I can't, since one has yet to appear. For many readers of this journal, the most readily accessible discussions of a host of related concerns can be discovered in the writings of Professor Hardin. *Stalking the Wild Taboo* (1978), *Naked Emperors* (1982), and *Filters Against Folly* (1985) are among his long list of works. Such diverse commentators as Richard Lamm, Tomislav Sunic (in the January *Chronicles*), and the late Edward Abbey are representative of those who publicly recognize the cogency of his arguments.

Over twenty years ago, historian Andrew Hacker suggested that what had once been the *United* States had already ceased to exist and what remained is simply "bounded territory." There is, to my mind, nothing "conservative," nor necessarily "pro-life," about policies that, if not soon reversed, must almost certainly lead our "bounded territory" to enjoy the environmental, economic, and ethnic conditions prevailing in such places as the Indian subcontinent. This is not a future I imagine most readers of *Chronicles* should look forward to.

On 'Affirmative Scholarship'

In Murray Rothbard's deconstruction of Thomas Sowell (Opinions, December 1990), there is an incontrovertible point about language and politics: when you get right down to it, contending or merely competitive parties around the world do not like to rule themselves, or be ruled, in the language of the other guy.

I have wondered for some time how this matter of language will work out in the proposed European unification. Italians will communicate with Finns in — what? — English? I read somewhere years ago that scientists in communist Albania had only English in which to share research with peers in communist China. Is English to become, by default, the lingua franca (odd term in this connection) of the new Europe? That would be an amusing last stage in the decline of empire, but one imagines the political resentments would be huge.

So I hereby announce a campaign — that I cannot imagine pursuing vigorously — to establish the renewal and teaching of Latin as the language of unified Europe. Once you merely state the idea, the advantages leap to mind and don't need to be enumerated here.

I have high hopes for this proposal because we have seen in our own time an impressive example of such a restitution: Hebrew coming back to life in Israel as a medium for speech, newspapers, and novels.

This is an idea whose time has come. *N'est-ce pas?*

— Tom White
Odessa, TX

Mr. Fleming Replies:

I couldn't agree more. When I made the suggestion, more or less tongue in cheek, that poets may as well write in Latin, for all the audience they are going to have, the *Village Voice* found the idea hilarious.

On 'Good News'

I received in the mail an advertisement for your magazine and decided to accept the invitation to have the magazine sent to me. I recently received the December 1990 issue, and I am amazed at how little your magazine resembles the magazine that was advertised.

I did not keep the ad. I wish I had so that I could quote it now. But I understood the gist of the ad to be that the people who run the magazine were unhappy about the basic thrust of contemporary American culture, that you criticized it from a conservative point of view and praised works of value that the guardians of the dominant culture denigrated or ignored.

The December issue indicates that your writers think that American culture has two problems, one small and one large. The small one is that some of the people active in the dominant culture go a little bit too far. The big one is those nasty old conservatives who don't like what your writers write.

What do your writers like? Women's studies departments (rigorous ones, of course), the lambada, Paul Ehrlich, National Public Radio opening a new office, mercantilist economics, that bloodthirsty liberal Richard Lamm, society (especially New York City) falling apart.

What do your writers hate? Those stupid conservatives who don't like women's studies departments ("self-proclaimed defenders of inherited culture" who by opposing women's studies cause it to be bad), the National Endowment for the Arts, "the far-right loonies of the Hearst press, columnists like Fulton Lewis and simpleminded 'patriots' on the House Un-American Activities Committee," fluoridation, New York City, immigrants, those Washington conservatives who read *Chronicles* too closely, the lack of affirmative action hiring of mathematicians and scientists at the Institute for Advanced Studies.

In general, I found your writers to have that self-indulgent style of writing characteristic of community college students. They often dealt with trivial issues in petty ways. The only reason I would subscribe to this magazine is to find out whether each and every issue contains compliments for Gore Vidal and Norman Mailer.

— Eugene Hamill
Folcroft, PA

Mr. Fleming Replies:

Direct mail packages can never say more than a little about the quality of a magazine. Ours did not tell you to watch out for unpredictable judgments or unfashionable opinions. Ours did not declare openly that we were not preaching only to the choir, or that we thought it our duty to expose our readers to a variety of points of view, while making our own positions clear in editorials. We also did not say, because we thought it was unnecessary, that we frequently publish articles and reviews with which I and my editors disagree. But once we have commissioned a piece, we only reject it on grounds of style or competence, never for ideological reasons. In the future, you should stick to advertising copy exclusively and avoid the painful experience of thinking for yourself.

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THE RESPECTABLE RIGHT turned savagely against Michael Levin last spring for holding unacceptable views on the reasons for differing levels of measurable intelligence among the races. Thus Peter Collier, in organizing a Second Thoughts conference for those who had rallied to "democracy" from the 60's New Left, disinvited, after having invited, the controversial Professor Levin. Shortly thereafter Levin was driven from the executive board of the National Association of Scholars, and criticized in the press. For example, in a May 18 editorial in the *New York Post*, Eric Breindel decried Levin as a purveyor of "poison." Though Breindel stopped short, albeit barely, of calling for Levin's removal from American education, he did accuse him of "group libel" that "inspires racial hatred and intolerance" and leads to "mass murder." Never mind that Levin's reasoning about I.Q. disparities recapitulates what research psychologists and geneticists already believe and sometimes say. Or that Breindel never bothers to refute Levin's arguments. His comparison of Levin to cranks who deny that the holocaust occurred ignores the obvious methodological difference that, unlike apologists for Hitler, Levin builds his case on solid evidence. One is, of course, entitled to disagree with his conclusion, that cognitive disparities between the races are largely due to genetic causes. But it is perfectly outrageous to accuse Levin of fudging facts or of issuing a warrant for mass murder.

About two weeks before Breindel's exercise in hyperbole, a related attack came from Bruce Fein, in the form of a column against "racist speech." Fein praised a recently enacted law in Canada that made it a crime to offend ethnic or racial groups. Though especially pleased with the prospect of treating bigots who challenge settled opinions on the holocaust as criminals, Fein was also intent on clarifying "democratic" canons of tolerance: "Prohibiting racially and religiously bigoted speech is praiseworthy" because "it salutes reason as the backbone of freedom and tolerance." But it is never made clear what exactly Fein means by "bigoted." Does he mean incitement to racial and religious riots, or would he extend the term to include those whose views on inherited intelligence or on the number of people killed at Auschwitz differ from his own? Would Fein, for example, permit those who disagreed with him to do scholarship on an ethnically sensitive subject, without risking public obloquy and even imprisonment?

Within the "conservative movement," which may be as anachronistic an expression as "Christendom" or "Jewry," a growing tendency can be found to interpret "bigoted" in a Pickwickian sense. It has come to connote being out of sync with neoconservative funding organizations, the Beltway dialogue now being conducted between the Heritage Foundation and David Broder, or the established social circle of Bill Buckley. Not only the neocons but much of the New York-Washington right now epitomize a mocking description once applied to Irving Kristol's legions, representatives of the "harmless persuasion."

A key problem with what is mistakenly styled the American right is its uneasiness with academic freedom. In the name of democratic equality and Cold War liberal slogans, the right assaults the academic civility that it hypocritically claims to be defending. It has become the "thought police," intent on punishing anyone guilty of an inappropriate reflection.

There is a non-opportunistic reason why these developments have occurred. The current debate over values between the left and the establishment conservatives is one over the right to impose a shared democratic faith. The "Western tradition" has come under attack from the intellectual left as essentially anti-egalitarian: impervious to the concerns of blacks, gays, and women. To this the conservative response, as articulated by Lynne Cheney, William Bennett, Chester Finn, and Jack Kemp, is that the Western tradition, properly understood, does in fact lead to democratic equality, but a form of it that black radicals and the New Left disavowed in the 1960's.

This debate over values is necessarily one among leftists, for it involves ideals framed by political intellectuals who are willing to apply political force on behalf of social change. Under the guidance of these intellectuals, cosmological debates have become merely genealogical ones. Agreement has already been reached on the highest good—universally exportable democratic equality. What remains to be debated is whether the West, and the United States in particular, is suited to lead a global crusade for that good; this in turn hinges on whether and how the West has affected the spread of the same good in the past.

What further divides the respectable left from the respectable right is the choice of means for advancing the ideal of equality. The left seeks to apply that ideal through further transfers of wealth and the extension of equal rights to hitherto "victimized" groups, including animals. The respectable right, by contrast, believes that the democratic revolution is mostly over at home. And though Representatives Kemp and Gingrich praise transfers of income to the underclass and minorities, they are principally concerned with the extension of democratic equality outside the United States. The political right in the Reagan years wished to see the United States further a global democratic revolution, endorsed by the President and most prominent conservative journalists. A major proponent of this policy, Ben Wattenberg of the American Enterprise Institute, proclaims democracy to be "our destiny." Like Woodrow Wilson, Wattenberg explains, Americans of this generation yearn to "get back to our mission," "democracy peddling." Toward this end he advocates increased budgets for the National Endowment for Democracy, Radio Free Europe, and other agencies that can help "[w]age democracy first class."

It is precisely this "democratic imperialism," to borrow the phrase Irving

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Babbitt applied to the Wilsonian world view of seventy years ago, that today's conservatives uphold in education and foreign policy. Because of this imperialist impulse they can no longer take the side of liberty or scholarship in the critical confrontation now taking place over academic freedom. The Italian social thinker Marcello Veneziani, in a newly published work, *Processo all' occidente: la società globale e i suoi nemici*, presents the view that Marxism has not gone down to defeat, but been incorporated into the "neocapitalist reconstruction" of the West. The exclusive identification of Western civilization with "democratic capitalism" shows the power of Marxist materialism, secularism, and egalitarianism in shaping what claims to be the triumphant anticommunist side. The democratic capitalist West, as seen by Veneziani, represents Marxism without its messianic, derivatively religious, aspect. It may be argued, however, that Marxist pseudo-religiosity also plays a role in the democratic capitalists' crusade against heretics, inside and outside of universities. How else to explain their savage war against the critics of democratic equality?

It is now a conservative principle to treat as closed those philosophical questions that are incompatible with egalitarian doctrine. Unlike the left, moreover, movement conservatives repackage leftist causes and present them as conservative ones. They purge their own ranks to enforce conformity to leftist dogma, be it the denial of genetic influence on intelligence or the belief in universally exportable human rights. No wonder such people take their marching orders from the graduates of Eastern European Socialism huddled in Midtown Manhattan! The Western European and American traditions of freedom have become alien to the new conservatives. Like their leftist counterparts, from whom they are less and less distinguishable, these ideologues represent Hegel's World Spirit in retreat, the culture of personalism and ordered liberty yielding to Oriental despotism. With the waning of the Cold War, such robots may be more harmful to a free society than Marxist historians or the performers of textual legerdemain. Heaven help us if they do manage to go anywhere. They will likely beat up on honest scholars and honest conservatives even more than have other leftist bigots.

—*Paul Gottfried*

THE BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION'S 73rd anniversary set the stage for an angry dissident's attempt to assassinate Mikhail Gorbachev at an outdoor rally. It would have been the first shot of the coming Russian revolution, which may be peaceful, but more likely not.

Time is running out for peaceful change. Gorbachev's new Treaty of the Union is supposed to create a federation government with the republics. To the republics' leaders, it represents the return of Soviet imperialism. The republics don't want power sharing; they want an end to Moscow-run socialism. And they won't accept compromise, despite Mr. Gorbachev's promise of "massive bloodshed" if they don't.

The official "economy" is in uncontrollable free fall. A team of Soviet bureaucrats recently surveyed state stores to see how many goods out of one thousand were available. The result: four. A famine seems inevitable, especially if Mr. Gorbachev cracks down further on the underground economy. A growing number of dissidents say they cannot contain their rage against a system that has driven the country into the ground.

When the present reforms began, I was working in the Soviet Academy of Sciences, later serving as an adviser to the Gorbachev reform team. I was part of a small cadre of economists who saw firsthand that Gorbachev knew nothing about economics. The only market he understood, or would tolerate, was a corner flea market for consumer goods. His main goal was to work *against* reforms that would create a real economy. In the end, he has succeeded only in scrambling the structures of authority within the command economy and has failed to introduce a market where it really counts: the capital goods sector.

All this sounds foreign to Western ears. We are constantly inundated with the media's praise for *perestroika*, *glasnost*, and Mr. Gorbachev—and American taxpayers are expected to bail him out. In fact, Mr. Gorbachev's ballyhooed *perestroika* was a transparent attempt to "improve" and "perfect" the workings of socialism, which is like trying to make the U.S. Congress smart. *Glasnost* was fine, but it only allowed pent-up anger to be released.

Even when Mr. Gorbachev was rewarded the Nobel Prize, he was assuming dictatorial powers greater than all his predecessors. The media tells us this is necessary to implement economic reform.

Yet apologies from the West are nothing new. After the October Revolution, Western academics, government officials, and their counterparts in the media sang hymns for decades to the Soviet experiment in socialism. Seventy-three years later, their voices have softened, but the "experts" have not stopped equating whatever the Soviet Union does with progress. Sovietologists still have faith in the willingness of the Soviet leadership to lead their country from barbarism to civilization.

Attending Washington think-tank meetings on the Soviet economy brings back memories of meetings of the Central Committee. We are supposed to sing more hymns to Soviet leaders, predict future prosperity, and attack the impatience of the radicals.

The experts spend most of their time arguing about statistics. They never acknowledge that all statistics about the Soviet economy are useless. Aggregate statistics from capitalist countries are questionable enough. But under socialism, nobody knows the value of anything, which makes calculation impossible. Add to that the incentive of those doing the reporting to lie, and you've got a real mess.

The truth is that the Soviet Union has no economy—no enterprise, no entrepreneurship, no free-floating prices, no reliable currency—so there is no hope in trying to reform it. It must be scrapped entirely.

Mr. Gorbachev—George Bush's hero—told the Central Committee that his newest plan is oriented toward "the betterment of socialism . . . and is completely in line with the socialist choice and socialist ideals." He wants to "create a real and healthy basis for genuine collectivism" by allowing "different forms of socialist property."

There are no plans to abolish or even cut bureaucracies, price reform will be extremely limited, and the

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capital stock will remain largely socialized. When the Soviets say privatization, they mean that "one enterprise will own another," so most of the stock will be owned by other enterprises in the same industry, and not by the public. This creates state-protected private cartels that will protect each other, both economically and politically. Party leaders still talk of the "right to a job," the "right to leisure," the "right to housing," and other Brezhnev-era foolishness. Nobody is talking about reforming socialized medical care, which is killing the public.

True reform, if the leadership really wants it, should take no longer than a day or two. It should feature total privatization, a defunded state apparatus, complete price decontrol, a new monetary system, the rule of law, complete independence for the republics, and no new dictators. (Editor's note: dictatorship is exactly what Foreign Secretary Eduard Schevardnadze warned against in his December 19, 1990, resignation address.) It is a bitter irony that after forty years of the Cold War the Bush administration is trying to salvage what's left of the old Communist order—for the sake of the New World Order.

Whether Washington or the Soviet leadership wants it, a revolution is coming. And whether it can be bloodless depends entirely on the present regime's willingness to relinquish its power, and soon.

—*Yuri N. Maltsev*

WASHINGTON'S GERRYMANdering of job seekers' test scores to comport with egalitarian fantasy has given us a glimpse of the testing center of the future. On university campuses, the proctors will be apostles of Political Correctness. Armed with a high-tech apparatus that can detect signs of brain activity, they will prowl the test centers and activate a mental scrambler whenever any test taker emits waves indicating he is taking unfair advantage of his brains. The time will have arrived, as leftist Kurt Vonnegut once imagined in the short story "Harrison Bergeron," when the ideal of absolute human equality has been reached; thanks to the 211th, 212th, and 213th Amendments to the Constitution and the diligence of the United States Handicapper General, nobody will be "smarter than anybody else" (or prettier or stronger or anything). Life, at last, will be fair.

Vonnegut's fiction was set in the year 2081. The reality of brain-leveling, however, is coming much sooner than that. The U.S. Department of Labor's system of secretly rigging scores on a widely used job aptitude test according to a racial handicapping scheme—a system that was exposed last summer and then put on hold by DOL—was not just a single quirky experiment destined to be interred with all the other brain-dead progeny of the social engineers. The race-norming of the General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB) so as to award blacks and Hispanics hefty bonus points to compensate for the lower test averages of their groups was, it turns out, part of a larger subterranean movement to rig test scoring toward racial parity—thus bringing job quotas in through the back door.

The irony of all this is that the egalitarians behind this scam are implicitly siding with racialists who long have contended that the disparity between white and black test averages is the result of immutable, genetic-based differences in intelligence. The test riggers are throwing in the towel, giving up the liberal faith in perfectibility of the human being. In the process they are besmirching the real achievements of those who have shown they don't need any hoked-up gradesheets to get ahead, and they are stoking the fires of racial resentment. The equal opportunity promised by the landmark civil rights laws has become the fulcrum for unequal entitlements.

The details of the great testing deception may be revealed only gradually, like the tantalizing lifting of an exotic dancer's veils. Nearly half a year had passed after then-Secretary of Labor Elizabeth Dole had suspended use of the race-normed GATB when it came to light that the staff of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission was dragooning Fortune 500 companies into using other kinds of tests that disguised racial preferences—quotas—in their scoring. EEOC chairman Evan J. Kemp, Jr. promptly disavowed race-norming, but his underling's scheming showed how deeply embedded in the bureaucracy the nefarious practice is. The EEOC-preferred subterfuge, or something like it, could be attached to GATB—a popular test for blue-collar jobs in wide use since 1947—when DOL trots out its next version of the test in the next year or two. An EEOC official admitted that yet another test favored by the federal bureaucracy is sex-normed: that is, because women tend to score lower than men on mechanical aptitude, the scores of women are padded to eliminate the difference in group averages.

Euphemisms are the stock in trade of test-falsifying egalitarians. The preferred one for the race-norming of GATB was "within-group scoring," which meant that blacks' percentiles resulted from being scored against fellow blacks alone, while Hispanics were ranked against other Hispanics, and "others" (mainly whites and Asians) were scored in a separate category. The most fraudulent aspect of this is that the jobs bureaucracy then gave out percentile scores to the unemployed test takers as well as to prospective employers as though they were straightforward merit-based rankings from the total test population. Were a private company to engage in such wholesale misrepresentation, the government and Naderites would sue it into receivership.

The EEOC-preferred alternative is couched in an even more misleading euphemism: "performance-based score adjustment." Contrary to its meritocratic ring, this method uses a convoluted formula to artificially boost percentiles based on the size of differences in average test scores between designated minorities and "other persons." Perversely, the worse blacks and Hispanics score as groups, the larger the bonus points they individually receive. This so-called "performance-fair" system gives minorities approximately 90 percent of the advantage they receive from "within-group" scoring. Linda S. Gottfredson of the Department of Educational Studies at the University of Delaware figured that a raw score of 270 that would give a white person a percentile score of 16 under either system would entitle a black test taker to a score of 50 under GATB race-norming and 46 under the performance-fair quota system.

There are two tip-offs that the performance-fair system may become the

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feds' preferred substitute for "within-group" scoring. First, the politicized National Academy of Sciences panel that in 1989 tried to invest GATB race-norming with a mantle of scientific respectability conceded that the performance-fair system might be easier to defend from reverse-discrimination charges. That could be in no small part, as Gottfredson remarks acerbically, because of a "technical impenetrability" that "protects the pseudoscience from easy unmasking." The second, and most important, tip-off is that Senator Teddy Kennedy's Labor Committee had quietly written this upside-down definition of "test fairness" into the legislative intent of the 1990 Kennedy-Hawkins civil rights bill that President Bush vetoed. Echoing the EEOC, the committee stated that an employment test, no matter how unbiased and job-related it might be, could no longer be defended on grounds of business necessity if its color-blind use resulted in disproportionate failure rates for minorities. Thus, the stage would have been set for federal courts to determine that Congress intended the use of tests with

built-in quotas. And that may yet come to pass in 1991 with President Bush's ability to sustain a second veto of a civil rights act in grave doubt.

The egalitarians have other options if they are thwarted in the underground rigging of test outcomes. One is to remove much of the cognitive material from tests—a "dumbing-down" process. It is worthy of note that the old Professional and Administrative Career Examination (PACE), an intellectually demanding test for entrance to the federal service, was trashed in 1982 after the lame-duck Carter administration signed a consent decree promising to develop tests that would eliminate "adverse impact" on minorities. Six new tests, given for the first time in June 1990, have less academic content than PACE and draw heavily on subjective "biodata." And, to be sure, another option is to abolish testing altogether, which may be the direction for a nation that prizes egalitarianism over excellence. A fine Third World nation this is becoming.

—*Robert G. Holland*

AT THE UNIV. OF TEXAS, in answer to criticism that he has turned a freshman English composition class into a one-sided debate on political correctness, English department chairman Joseph Kruppa has made several strongly worded replies. The concerns of his most outspoken critic, Professor Alan Gribben, are "nonsense." Gribben *et al.* are "people of bad intentions" who have been guilty of "misrepresentation and misinformation." The "only person with a political agenda is Gribben," and the college dean's postponement of the class (which was to have been taught in its revised form last fall) made Kruppa feel "sickened" and "disappointed." Barbara Harlow, an associate professor of English who also supports the revised course, was even less temperate, telling the student paper, the *Daily Texan*, that "The army hasn't been called in to UT, and the University hasn't been closed, but we need to recognize that there are academic death squads operating on our campus."

What is going on here is a fight over a change in a basic course in English composition. Though around 50 percent of UT's freshman test out of English 306, 2,500 to 3,000 students are required to take the course, which has traditionally covered argument and analysis and English grammar. In the past 306's teachers have had a choice from among three readers, with the freedom to bring in outside works as they deem appropriate, and the writers covered have ranged from Aristotle to Jonathan Swift to Jessica Mitford. A 6-page research paper was the final assignment, and the purpose of the class was to prepare students for the variety of writing that would be required of them in other UT courses, whatever their eventual major.

Citing a need for focus and the beneficial "side effect" of sensitizing students to their obligations toward various minorities, the course as it presently stands (the curriculum has been revised at least three times since last April) uses no textbook. Instead there is a required packet of readings on "difference," which is to say civil rights issues, and a syllabus that the teacher may not deviate from.

Among the readings studied are Peggy McIntosh's "White Privilege and Male Privilege," Richard Scotch's "Disability as the Basis for a Social Movement: Advocacy and the Politics of Definition," and Dennis and Harlow's *Yale Law & Policy Review* article, "Gay Youth and the Right to Education," plus a number of court cases.

The original textbook, which over the summer was dropped in response to the criticism, was not an English readings book at all but a sociology book edited by Paula Rothenberg and entitled *Racism & Sexism: An Integrated Study*. In her introduction to that book Rothenberg gives the following definition for racism: "*racism involves the subordination of people of color by white people*. While an individual person of color may discriminate against white people or even hate them, his or her behavior or attitude cannot be called racist. He or she may be considered *prejudiced* against whites and we may all agree that the person acts unfairly and unjustly, but *racism* requires something more than anger, hatred or prejudice; at the very least it requires *prejudice plus power*." Though the book has since been withdrawn by Chairman Kruppa and the author of the new 306 syllabus, Lower Division English Director Linda Brodkey, Rothenberg's viewpoint surely reflects their own.

Hence the criticism. Alan Gribben, a full professor who has been at UT since 1974 and who has taught composition classes, argues that Kruppa and Brodkey have taken a course in which "the subject matter has never been particularly important," because the real subject was English, and turned it "upside down." The focus of the class is now not composition, but civil rights.

Gribben questions the propriety of having faculty and graduate students in English discussing complicated legal issues. Furthermore, sociological articles and law decisions are proverbial for their bad style and lack of clarity. Gribben says with astonishment that the departmental committee of six that originally okayed the revised course "was not able to show me any evidence that style had been a consideration in choosing the reading."

John Ruszkiewicz, an associate professor of English and another critic of the new 306, points out that "the writing component of the course has

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been reduced to a unit on logic, which was a late addition. In my opinion, it wasn't part of the design they originally proposed. But when I pointed out they had no composition in the course at all, they suddenly added logic." It is clear from the syllabus that student writing has been de-emphasized. No assignment is more than 700 words long, and there is no term paper. It has been replaced by a 500 to 700-word "legal opinion," in which the student finds for either the plaintiff or the defendant in an assigned court case. But because undergraduates are not allowed to use the law library at UT, 306 students will be limited to the legal materials provided by their instructor and the course packet.

As mentioned above, this is a course that affects the university as a whole, and according to Gribben there is widespread dissatisfaction with the change. An ad expressing concern Gribben ran in the *Daily Texan* was signed by 56 professors, from a number of departments. But within the English department there is mostly support: a September vote on the new 306 reading list (the Rothenberg book having been cut) saw 46 votes in favor of the class, with 11 against and 3 abstaining. Up until now, despite the "death squads" rhetoric, it has seemed probable that the course will go through; in his announcement of the course's postponement the college dean expressed his enthusiasm for it. But the administration's ardor may be dampened by the largely negative publicity the case has received. As we go to press there are rumors at UT of a compromise, and the dean has resigned.

Chairman Kruppa maintains that "personal political beliefs are inevitable in the classroom," which in a limited sense is true. But that begs the question of substituting grammar for indoctrination, and Kruppa has not answered the charge that the readings on the course curriculum list present only one side of the affirmative action debate, or done anything to allay fears that some "illiberal" students will be penalized for their viewpoints. In any case, even a compromise will probably be a Pyrrhic victory for Gribben and Ruszkiewicz, who have been shunned by many of their colleagues and by their chairman. In their opposition to English 306 they have proved themselves too intolerably traditionalist, even for Texas.

—*Katherine Dalton*

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THE GATT TRADE talks in Europe collapsed and surprised advocates of the new international order. American officials tagged blame on the nations of Western Europe and Japan for their intransigent unwillingness to dismantle national farm programs sheltering indigenous rural communities. Our negotiators blasted the irrational protection of obsolete jobs and an incomprehensible subsidy to undercapitalized, inefficient industries seeking special privileges.

There is an alternate way, however, to view the same event: that the rest of the Western world refused to follow the United States in the willing sacrifice of its rural population to the shibboleth of efficiency; that other values were judged to have claims as well.

We Americans enjoy liberties originally won through the blood and character of an independent farming class. Industrialization made inevitable a contraction of the farm population as a share of the general population. Yet a peculiar American schizophrenia was also at work, with dark consequences. On the one hand, a stream of public rhetoric and (after 1932) federal programs has sought to save the family farm. On the other hand, a second stream of public rhetoric and (since the 1860's) federal programs have subsidized intensive research designed to improve agricultural efficiency by substituting capital (machines, synthetic fertilizers, chemicals) for labor.

The net result was both the virtual destruction of the family farm as a culturally relevant factor in America and massive subsidies to the farm sector: the worst of both worlds. Today, our family farms have become primarily old age homes, except for those marginal farming sectors that have avoided government subsidies and heavy capitalization—groups such as the Amish. We spend 20 billion dollars annually on farm programs, yet the proportion of the American population residing on farms is lower than in smaller, more crowded nations such as France and Germany.

Western Europeans, like the Japanese, simply give greater credence to a vision that once guided the American agrarian republic: in the words of poet Wendell Berry, "that as many as possible should share in the ownership of the land and thus be bound to it by economic interest, by the investment of love and work, by family loyalty, by memory and tradition."

In defending the French wheat farmer or the Japanese rice grower, national politicians pay at least in part an honest tribute to a cultural connection with the land, and a respect for husbandry, that appears to be incomprehensible to many American ideologues.

The relevant philosophical point is that an unencumbered market is not an absolute value in human affairs. Without question, it is the finest system for creating and delivering the highest quality goods at the lowest price. Healthy communities, though, always involve competing values as well. For example, a successful family does not operate on market principles. Indeed, it is the only pure collective that successfully operates on the socialist principle of "from each according to his ability; to each according to his need." As Garrison Keillor once noted, small towns survive through a related form of restraint: you buy your new toaster at Ernie's Dry Goods, although you could get it cheaper at the big city mall, because Ernie is your neighbor.

Europeans and the Japanese have placed a high national value on the preservation of a peasant agriculture, with concepts of family, soil, history, and national security intimately involved. In contrast, American policymakers have managed the near destruction of our independent yeoman class. Rather than excoriate our key trading partners, we might better focus on steps that might correct our own farm follies.

—*Allan Carlson*

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Principalities & Powers

by Samuel Francis

Despite last summer's brassy pronouncements that the owl had sung her watchsong on the towers of Capitol Hill, the oligarchs of Congress bit the reins in their teeth and lashed their mounts full into the maelstrom of constituents disgusted with pay-raises, privileges, perversion, and pretension. Some 96 percent of the incumbents managed to ride out of the electoral cyclone of 1990 still tall in the stirrups, and only the most foppish fell off. But no one, least of all the oligarchs themselves, should think that their victory means that the storm is over. The high mysteries of public opinion research show that Americans are more distrustful of Congress than ever before, and only by exploiting every sinister trick known to political science were the congressmen able to wheedle and whine their way back to Washington. You can fool some of the people some of the time—and that's enough.

Most voters—and only about 35 percent even bothered to show up at the hustings—may imagine that their own representative is somehow magically exempt from the inexorable laws that govern the degeneration of moral tissue once it hits the toxic atmosphere of political power. Hence, in the delusion that only their congressperson is a rock of rectitude in an ocean of sinful vacillation, citizens often were happy to send him back to the salons of Georgetown and the obscure pleasures of the congressional gymnasium. Then again, maybe they just didn't want him back home at all and took the view that employing him in Washington is the modern equivalent of a request from an emperor of ancient Rome that a courtier inflict his presence on the eternal city no more and betake himself to Thither Bithynia.

Yet the Middle American Revolution is not so easily thwarted. Despite the victory of the oligarchy last year, the frustrations of the shrinking American middle class remain deep and obvious even to the victors. The success of David Duke's underdog candidacy in Louisiana, the victory of Senator Jesse Helms in North Carolina, the defeat of a proposition for a holiday honoring Martin Luther King in Arizona, the renaming of "The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard" in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and the popularity of tax and term limitation measures in several states showed that in some corners of the land the wheels of revolution are beginning to churn and that the natural fear of economic and cultural dispossession is the oil that greases them.

But those wheels will never get out of the ditch if mainstream conservatives are in the driver's seat. Never in recent history has the now largely defunct "conservative movement" produced a serious national political leader or accomplished much of anything on the national political scene. The most electrifying leaders of the American right—Joe McCarthy, George Wallace, and Ronald Reagan—emerged into prominence not because of the Latinate magazines and recondite philosophizing of organized American conservatism, but due to their own innate ability to capture and express the aspirations of a repressed political class. Moreover, while the Middle American Revolution in some respects harbors sentiments that conservatives share, in others it is hostile or indifferent to much of what conservatives in the United States have represented.

Throughout American history, the mainstream of conservative thought, from the anti-Federalists through the Confederacy to the resistance against the New Deal and the Great Society, has centered on the defense of liberty: states' rights, individual freedom, social and private as opposed to governmental responsibility, local as opposed to centralized policies. This was the theme of South Carolina's Senator Robert Young Hayne's reply to Daniel Webster, when the Southerner articulated one of the classic refutations of the northern Federalist-Whig vision of a united nation expanding economically under federal supervision. This also, as Shelby Foote argues in his three-volume Civil War series, was the rationale of Jefferson Davis in his inaugural address, declaiming that "all we ask is to be let alone," and it was the basis of the defensive military strategy of the Confederacy, which ultimately led to its defeat.

This too has been the approach of American conservatism in the 20th century, which, despite the various philosophical costumes in which it has garbed itself, has taken its stand with strict constitutionalism, laissez-faire economics, traditional social morality, and the freedom of individuals to pursue happiness in their own way. The central project of 20th-century conservatism has been to resist the aggressive imperialism of Washington and its sisters in the bureaucratized corporate and union economy and cultural regime, all of which fused together in the New Deal and its later derivatives; and the core of the conservative resistance has been the preservation or restoration of republican liberty.

But the only means of resistance conservatives' ideology permitted them was to engage in formal political contests within the framework of the constitutional system. The most popular and common path of conservative resistance has thus been purely and narrowly political; conservatives sought merely to hold up or reverse the leviathan's march by winning elections to Congress and the White House and by weaving bureaucratic intrigues within the leviathan's entrails. Eventually many of them became so enamored of politics, policy-cooking, and political responses that they evolved into the "Big Government conservatives" of today, centered exclusively in Washington, where they carefully plan how to arrange the deck chairs on the S.S. Titanic.

Because political conservatives have decided to play by their rivals' rules in their rivals' game, it shouldn't be surprising that conservatives wound up with pretty much their rivals' thoughts and values. In recent years, conservative political leaders have increasingly regurgitated the basic premises of the liberal ideology they claim to be opposing and have quietly ceased to resist the left on much of anything except means. The government ought to promote equality, they say, but affirmative action just isn't the way to achieve it. Civil liberties are what we want too, and the only thing wrong with pornography and drugs is that they might hurt children under 12. Fraternity is terrific, and global democratic capitalism, spreading human rights and democracy, and presidential supremacy in foreign affairs are the

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right instruments by which isolation can be overcome and planetary cosmopolitanism made to triumph forever. Some — not just paleoconservative dinosaurs — have begun to notice that the contemporary right seems to have turned into an ideological Xerox of liberalism.

Some others concluded that there was no point in resisting anyway. Whittaker Chambers came to believe that, and he ended his life in intense and private religious withdrawal, prophesying the apocalypse. At another extreme, H.L. Mencken also came to think that resistance to the New Deal regime was futile, and he withdrew into a passive Nietzschean cynicism. "At the moment," he wrote in his diary on June 1, 1942, "with the Roosevelt crusade to save humanity in full blast, my ideas are so unpopular that it is impossible, as it was from 1915 to 1920, for me to print them." Nor did it become possible again in his lifetime.

But if conservative activism was corruptive, conservative escapism has proved to be no less ineffective. Leviathan is relentless. By its very nature, it is never defensive but always aggressive. The millenarian dogmas that animate it, the vested interests that it serves, and the emotional resentments from which it breeds impel it forever to trample out the vineyards wherever they are found. Leviathan decides to spread democracy and human rights throughout the world and plans wars in which you and your sons (and daughters) will have to fight and die — but never win — for principles and peoples you've never heard of. It blathers about "collective security," "disarmament," the "international rule of law," "interdependence," "global democracy," and "the New World Order," all of which are simply global versions of the same therapeutic managerial welfare state it has constructed domestically. It takes your money to pay for all the pathologies and neuroticisms that social managers imagine are the Higher Civilization. Leviathan won't stop at the city limits and leave the suburbs alone. There's nowhere to run anymore, and now that the country is facing recession, you couldn't afford to run even if you could.

What this means is that the traditional American conservative defensive strategy is no longer practicable and that those who want to defend themselves against leviathan must go on the offensive. They must seek not just to restrain power but to gain power for themselves.

This does not mean, as neoconservatives, the New Right, and Big Government conservatives believe, that the goal should be the mere capture of the existing governmental apparatus through winning elections and getting jobs in the bureaucracy. Control of the formal, legal apparatus of political power will not yield social and cultural power, what the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci called "cultural hegemony." In 1980, conservative Republicans won control of the White House and the Senate and for six years accomplished virtually nothing substantial in arresting the growth of leviathan or reversing its course. The reason for their failure had to do partly with the personal weaknesses of many of those who won but also with their neglect of aspiring to the cultural dominance that is the effective prerequisite for effective political power. The most radical of the conservatives of the 1980's, the New Right, was either oblivious to or utterly incompetent to deal with culture, not just in the sense of the higher arts, but also in the sense of using social and cultural institutions at the lower levels of family, neighborhood, schools, colleges, local communities, clubs, and workplaces to build a Middle American counterculture within the belly of the beast.

The dynamic of the Middle American Revolution is captured at the end of Tom Wolfe's *Bonfire of the Vanities*, when the flabby yuppy protagonist Sherman McCoy has been stripped of wealth, his status, his wife, his mistress, his children, his friends, his class, his privacy, and his freedom. At last dispossessed of every external garment of his social identity, he turns to fight. Explaining what happened to him, he draws an analogy with a house pet that's been turned into a vicious watchdog. "They don't alter that dog's personality with dog biscuits or pills," he says. "They chain it up, and they beat it, and they bait it, and they taunt it, and they beat it some more, until it turns and bares its fangs and is ready for the final fight every time it hears a sound. . . . The dog doesn't cling to the notion that he's a fabulous house pet in some terrific dog show, the way the man does. The dog gets the idea. The dog knows when it's time to turn into an animal and fight."

Or, as another fighter once said, you have nothing to lose but your chains of slavery.

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Poe at the End

by R.H.W. Dillard

October. Poe in Baltimore. Poe
At the end, going North, away
From Virginia, keeping promises
Despite the black beak of despair,
Laid over, waiting for the train,
But just now, drunk, out of the coop,
Leaning in Lombard Street
Against the window of a store,
Making his pitched and stammered way
Toward Cooth & Sergeant's Tavern—
(Sergeant Major Poe, First Artillery,
Honorably discharged so many years ago)—
Slow way of starts and fits,
The drink and drugs sluing his heart
Into blind staggers and sways.

Away from Virginia and toward
Virginia in the grave. She played
The harp that January night and sang,
It was a good song, too,
But so soon, so quickly a tiny vessel
Popped in her throat like a New Year's squib
Just as she reached her last high note.
And for five years it broke and broke
Again, until she died, was laid away,
And Poe learned an awful truth:
Helter skelter or catcher in the rye,
Art kills as often as it saves.

On Lombard Street in Baltimore, memory
Twists him, presses his forehead against the glass,
His heart wheezing like wind through the cottage wall
In Fordham where Virginia lay. His heart lifts
In his chest, flaps clumsily aloft
Like a great white bird, then settles back,
And Poe is grounded, left in the lurch
As he was abandoned by his party friends
After voting all morning under a dozen names:
His own, Usher, Reynolds, Dupin, Pym,
Raising his hand again and again, taking the oath,
Swearing he was who he was and was not,
Swearing he was.

Hart Crane asked him
Nearly a century later whether he denied
The ticket, but how could he deny a thing,
He who was all things that day and none,
A multitude of beings and only one,
Leaning on a window, his forehead on the glass,
His eyes unfocused or focused deep within.

And yet he does see past Virginia
With blood on her blouse, past Elmira
Left behind in Richmond, jilted
Before she ever reached the altar,
Past even the bloated face of Edgar Poe
Reflected in the window, drawn and drawn out
In the wobbly glass, the sodden man
In a stranger's threadbare clothes
With only Dr. Carter's borrowed cane
Still clutched in that familiar hand,
Sees through the tortured glass
To a display of pewter and silver
Laid out within the shop, slick knives
With thin images of a singular man
Upon each blade, rounded shining cups
With a bulge-nosed alien face
In each curved surface, two large
Silver plates with his own desperate stare
Reflected plain in each, the brow,
The carved out cheeks, blue lips
Beneath the sad mustache.

But he
Looks beyond this olio of images,
These hard lies and harder truths
Displayed before him, to find
A large silver coffee urn, beknobbed
And crusted with handles and thick
Vines, blossoms and twisted ribbons,
Its surface flat and curved and rounded,
Concave, convex, and convolute,
And in its turbulent reflections
He sees a young man's face,
A young man with dark hair
And uneven eyes, a young man
Leaning on a cane with promises
To keep, a face he recognizes
But cannot name, knows but cannot claim,
That looks him steadily eye to eye.

His heart will soon calm down enough
For him to stutter on, reach Cooth &
Sergeant's, fall onto a bench, be found,
Be carried to the hospital, lie there in fever,
Call Reynolds' name, ease out of delirium
Only to say, gently, "Lord help my poor soul,"
And die, having for one moment on Lombard Street
Learned still another awful truth:
Pell mell or waiting just to die,
Art saves as often as it kills.

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Anarchy and Family in the Southern Tradition

by George Garrett

For this issue of *Chronicles* we have assembled the thing in and of itself, examples of Southern literature as it is here and now, a couple of appropriate poems and a work of fiction by one of the South's finest writers, together with some good talk about contemporary letters in the South. I would rather not be redundant (the rhetorical effect of which is always to generate a chorus of huge yawns among readers); so I will here merely point out that most of the questions and some of the answers about the nature of Southern literature, past and present, are at least touched on in the pieces that follow. Perhaps most interestingly, R.H.W. Dillard's new poem, "Poe at the End," and Fred Chappell's long story/short novel (shall we go ahead and call it a novella? Why not?), "Ancestors," using both fact and fable, directly address the happy and probably insoluble problem of defining Southern literature. Among other things.

I commend each and all of these pieces to you. Including the work by Dillard and Chappell, and the poem by James Seay, we have work by the latest generation of Southern writers, all of them already established and altogether likely to be at once active and influential in the decade ahead and the early years of the new century. That gives us, not counting the newest of the new and the youngest of the young, three living generations of Southern writers. Although we have lost Robert Penn Warren and Walker Percy we still have so many others around and about: Andrew Lytle and Cleanth Brooks, for example; Eudora Welty and Peter Taylor and Shelby Foote, for instance, each having by now earned more than regional honors and recognition.

When you think of all these, together with many others, a surprising number, at one end of the living tradition and, at the other, the younger writers who are gathered here and represent their own generation, you have a sense of the continuity and variety of the Southern tradition in our time. Missing, but their long shadows remain, are a crowd, a cloud of elders and witnesses who link the great flowering of Southern writing in this century to its historical and literary past: first and foremost, of course William Faulkner, who mapped the territory for us even as, in different forms and strange contexts, he influenced and changed the literature of the wide world in all its babbling languages; the great and greatly influential Agrarians and Fugitives — Tate and Ransom and Donald Davidson and Carolyn Gordon and Brooks and Warren, and, of course, their own pupils, people like James Dickey and Randall Jarrell and Madison Jones; the remarkable independents, people like Thomas Stribling and Stark Young and John Gould Fletcher; the first generation of women who made their way, and their living, as writers — Ellen Glasgow and Mary Johnston and Elizabeth Madox Roberts and Evelyn Thomson and so many others, not least among them being Margaret Mitchell. And all of this should not slight or ignore the no-longer separate and equal tradition of black Southern writing, from, say, Ralph Ellison (who sometimes identifies himself as a

George Garrett's most recent novel is Entered From the Sun, *published last fall by Doubleday. He lives in Charlottesville and holds a chair at the University of Virginia.*

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Southern writer and who is member-in-good-standing of the Fellowship of Southern Writers), to younger and newer voices like those of Percival Everett and Randal Kenan.

All of the above is hopelessly inadequate, but at least serves to give a sense of a thriving and, yes, traditional enterprise. Which is a point so taken for granted that our younger writers in this issue do not feel the need to make it strongly. Point is, and truth is, we all know each other—the work, anyway. There is great independence, even a certain anarchy in the Southern tradition; but there is also a sense of family.

Another thing not mentioned by our writers here, not because it is taken for granted, but rather because it is so sensitive and the risks of offense are large and real, is the split within the family of Southern letters that is directly a result of the Civil War and the loss, for the better part of a century since then, of major publishing centers and business in the South. Ever since the Civil War the Southern writers who had any kind of national ambitions or aspirations, or the writer who worked in forms, drama, for example, whose principal centers of commerce and appreciation are elsewhere, has been forced to live up to an alien image of what the Southern writer is supposed to be and to say; and, behind that, the subject, itself; the youth presented in approved and certified Southern literature must conform to an outsider's image. Long training in and acceptance of the forms of good manners and tact have prepared the Southern writer for a certain amount of role playing in life and in art. Role playing on both sides, for example, was and probably remains a crucial element in the complexities of race relations in the South. Similarly, role playing among Southerners, including any number of Southern writers who have chosen to move and to live in the North is nothing new. To an extent we have all sold out, some minimally and only for the sake of survival, others more seriously and for the sake of . . . success. Remember some of what Faulkner wrote in his introduction to the Modern Library edition of *Sanctuary*? "I began to think of books in terms of possible money. I decided I might just as well make some of it myself. I took a little time out, and speculated on what a person in Mississippi would believe to be the current trends, chose what I thought was the right answer and invented the most horrific tale I could imagine and wrote it in about three weeks . . ." Shades of Bret Easton Ellis! Of course, there is much more to the Faulkner story than that; it becomes an *exemplum* of artistic integrity. Many of us have exercised and demonstrated much less integrity. And this needs to be understood. Should I be bold and name names? Should I offer that much integrity? Not bloody likely. But let this much be understood. That to the extent that Southern writing is apt to be, on a national scale, commercially or critically successful it is also likely to conform to imposed or, anyway, distorted and generalized stereotypes. There is always a danger that Southern literature will fall victim to terminal cuteness. In an age when the words *politically correct* can be used without irony or shame, it is always a possibility that Southern literature will die of a surfeit of assertive liberalism.

I need to add this mild warning. Although we have seen the arrival and expansion of several good, if small, Southern publishers in the past decade (Algonquin, Peachtree, Blair, Palaemon, among others), we must not look to Southern publishers to change or to ease this problem. For they, too, must prosper nationally to endure and must play their role as seriously as any ambitious (or desperate) individual. The Southern publishers cannot afford to take many chances. Not yet.

And within the South we have to admit to some other kinds of role playing, deviations from the strict and factual truth. Think how many among us (again, no names, no, sir) insist on claiming a more genteel or aristocratic lineage than any facts could be mustered to support. Or, sometimes in the same family, we lay claim to more rowdy depths of rednecks, cracker culture than even our best friends would allow. More recently we have two slight variations on this theme, both aesthetic: the worldlier-than-thou hard-nosed cynics and then the aesthetes who, though they may come, deep-rooted, from the deep boonies, try to allude as knowingly as any Manhattan sophisticate to the vintage wines of the world, to great foreign cities and foreign philosophers and artists. I have a poet friend who maintains that an absolute test of the fraudulent is the contemporary American writer, of any kind, who summons the image of Akhmanatoua into his own poem or story. He may be right. In any case, there are Southern writers who have done just that.

Enough of the negative.

Not much is or can be said in these pages about the Southern novel. Let this much be said: that the novels being written by Southern novelists are lively and various; and that the range and energy of these novelists, who have been busy and productive in large number since the beginning of this century, show no sign at all of shrinking or diminishing. If the novel finally does fall over dead, it won't be the fault of the Southerners.

Another point that needs to be made before I bow politely and leave the stage to our excellent performers. Except for some talk of literary criticism, we do not here make much of the very real and present contributions of Southern writers in the fields lumped together as nonfiction. I am thinking of the highly individual essays and articles of people like Roy Reed, Roy Blount, Sam Pickering, James M. Cox, Pat C. Hoy, Tom Wolfe, and our own John Shelton Reed. And it is in that field that we find, on the grandest scale, the greatest single literary work attempted and achieved by any American author, *The Civil War: A Narrative*, by the Southern novelist Shelby Foote. The late Walker Percy called it "our *Iliad*." In any case and in every detail, large and small, it is a magnificent work of fact and art, worthy of all the tradition and variety of Southern letters that came before it and, like the overwhelming achievement of the lifework of William Faulkner, becoming an integral part of the tradition, and by example and by challenge, becoming an invitation to the future. Foote said something of the same thing, himself, in his "Bibliographical Note" to Volume II of *The Civil War*, saying that, among his many sources, "Mark Twain and Faulkner would also have to be included, for they left their sign on all they touched, and in the course of this exploration of the American scene I often found that they had been there before me." Foote joins them as one of the few who point the way. ◈

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With the deaths of Robert Penn Warren and Walker Percy the specter of the star system is loose again in the land. "Who will be their successors? Who will pick up their mantle?" It's a plaintive cry, predictable but genuine, largely journalistic and academic—a spume from the wave of canon-making—thinned by its basis in literary politics. It isn't cast up, usually, by writers, at least not those writing, since their attention is centered elsewhere. They do lament, *of course, the passing of the likes of Percy and Warren, some grieving the loss of the men more than the art. The living, however, aren't meant to supplant the dead, but to fulfill their own destinies.*

At a festival honoring his work in 1985, Fred Chappell was asked how it felt to be a Southern writer. "You've got to come from somewhere," he replied. "Not everyone can be born in the Museum of Modern Art." The breadth of reference in the apothegm, as well as the choices that Chappell has made as a writer that underlie it, make it hard to dismiss the answer as flippant. It suggests in part Chappell's refusal to play the star-system game, to kowtow to the power centers of publication (fortunately dispersing), to court reviewers. It also points to the substantial shift in Chappell's work over the past thirty years.

After trying on ill-fitting European costumes (Rimbaud, Mann), a Faustian sort of bargaining with interior devils that took derivative forms, he began facing and learning to be himself, developing his poems and stories and novels along lines laid out in his regional upbringing. This has involved a complex of emphases and engagements at a deep level of choice. Two of those seem pertinent here.

Chappell's erudition, his extensive reading, his sophistication about fiction and about what can be done in general with language, are meant not to replace storytelling and its illusions of character, but to serve them, to deepen and enrich. In the history of our literature we may be in the muddled midst of learning this again. No compelling novelist has written without a complex theoretical sense of what he or she is doing, but that theory becomes part of subject matter at the desiccation of the fiction. There are other major differences, of course, between Chappell's first four novels, and the work that begins with Midquest, *but this one seems basic: he has chosen to be "unmodern" in his subordination of theoretical concerns to the immediate fabric of the work itself. We see the rug, not the weave in the rug.*

Secondly, he has chosen to be a comic writer. It's not my place here to define "Southern," but Chappell's work has certain characteristics that have, over the centuries, come to be associated with the region. Humor, thank God, transcends geographical and national boundaries. Chappell's, however, is Southern in its pace—I don't mean timing, *but rather the accretive, almost shy way good will hides itself behind slyness. Southerners have had to become used to living with poisonous snakes and excessive heat, and the adaptation that has required leads to the kind of humor I'm alluding to. Joe Robert Kirkman, the central figure in Chappell's last two novels, is an embodiment of this, coming to accept his difficult, discommoded self through the warmth of laughter not at, but* with, *who he is. A single passage can't do justice to this because it* builds; *Joe Robert's colloquy with the goat on the schoolhouse roof, his interview with Dora Stoner, or his growing realization that no matter how hard he tries he can't tell a lie, are revealing instances in* Brighten the Corner Where You Are.

This involves tone as much as detail or behavior. A Southerner plays *verbally as part of everyday life. I've always been leery of the glibness with which people present the South as distinctive because it's the only part of the country to have lost a war, to have endured an enemy's ravaging a land and degrading an entire heritage. But I have come to think that experience has contributed to a sense of the gentle undoing of solemnity that is sometimes part of a Southerner's tone of voice.*

Blacks have contributed to this, too. There have been two slave races in the South, in the sense that the loss of the Civil War reduced white people of all classes to a similar humiliation. Being at the bottom can teach one to see daily existence from a wider perspective and to spread its intensity across that horizon.

Pace, heat, the experience of a beaten people, then, contribute to the humor of the South. They also, paradoxically, lead to focus and concentration, other qualities central to Chappell's work. Hunkerin' down *some people call it, an expression that I've always liked for its inclusion of the body and the earth in the act of mental concentration. It's also an uncomfortable position to get into. Chappell's characters hunker; they pay attention, often out of the corners of their eyes. Here's a relevant passage from one of Chappell's stories, "Blue Dive." Stovebolt Johnson, a blues guitarist, has returned to rural North Carolina after a stretch in the slammer. He decides to wait on the porch of the house he has come to to ask for information. He sits down with his coffee, his guitar lying beside him in its case.*

> *He had been reflecting that if he was a woman's husband driving up from work at noontime he might not be overcome with joy to find a strange man and a guitar in his house. He spat out his chew of tobacco and worked up all the juice he could and spat that out, too. The first sip of coffee he wallowed about in his mouth, rinsing, and then got rid of. He'd known any number of men who could chew and drink at the same time, but he'd never got the hang of it. He took a swallow. It was strong and sweet as molasses. "You mama makes a fine cup of coffee," he said to the boy. "What kind of music do you like to listen?" He took the guitar out and fingered a few aimless notes.*

But the notes are no more aimless than the passage. This is almost ritual. It involves a third characteristic I see as especially Southern—courtesy. Tony Hillerman admires the practice of the Navajo in which a visitor to a hogan keeps a

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distance until the person being visited has time to prepare. You don't go right up and ring the doorbell, as it were. Southern courtesy involves much the same honoring of privacy and individuality.

Vladimir Nabokov said of his fictions that it wasn't the parts that mattered, it was their combination. The same thing is true of the qualities I'm speaking of in Fred Chappell's work. Gentle slyness, reserve, attention, all matter inestimably, but it is their combination that, shall we say, reveals the soul. In Chappell's fiction especially this can take fantastic, fabulous turns, sometimes satirical, as if haunted at once by the ghosts of Mark Twain and H.P. Lovecraft.

By way of the negative here, I might say that some qualities often highlighted positively in reviews of fiction that don't apply to Southern work might give my perspective some relief: zany, brash, fast-moving, *or* abrasive. *Southern humor, in fact, doesn't always make you laugh—though it often does. Its aim is more to comfort. It's an embedded attitude, a perspective from which life is lived, and it is in that dimension that the word* humor *slides toward* comic, *the kind of writer I've suggested Fred Chappell has chosen to become. I mean this term, of course, in the old sense of its opposition to* tragic.

Chappell's vision has shifted from the hermetic, sweaty, foreboding darkness of his first novels, to a hopeful, expansive opening toward light. Midquest *is the fulcrum in this change. That tetralogy's use of the structures, assumptions, and even a section of Dante's* Divine Comedy, *is the best indication of Chappell's new direction.* Midquest *closes with these lines:*

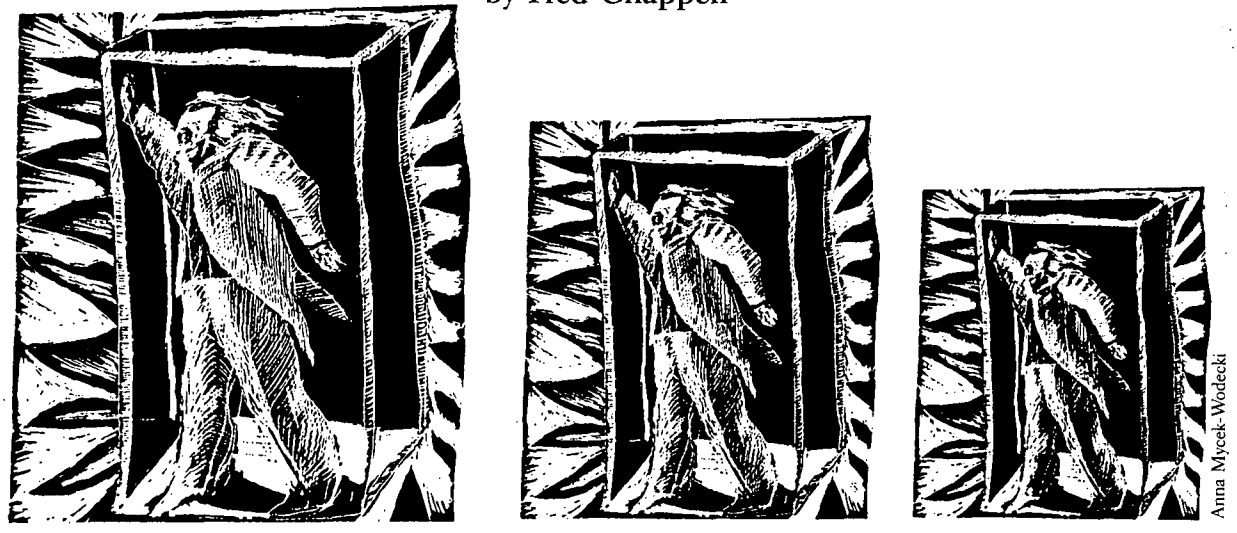
The love that moves itself in light to loving
Flames up like dew
Here in the earliest morning of the world.

Out of context they lose the enormously complex and varied tapestry that precedes them, and through which Chappell earns the right to say them. But they are central to the essentially comic vision that informs his work since the late 70's. Acceptance and affirmation are the keys, seen into and through in this world of violence and loss and deprivation. If you want a star, here's one.

—Dabney Stuart

Ancestors

by Fred Chappell



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Harry and Lydie were enduring their third ancestor and finding it a rum go. Not that they were surprised—the first two ancestors had also proved to be enervating specimens—and now they regretted the hour they had joined the Ancestor Program of the Living History Series. Sitting at dinner, fed up with Wade Wordmore, Harry decided to return this curious creature to his congressman, Doy Collingwood, at his local office over in Raleigh, North Carolina.

They were goaded into joining the program by that most destructive of all human urges: the desire for self-improvement. When, as part of the celebration of the one hundred fiftieth anniversary of the Civil War, the U.S. Archives and History Division called Harry Beacham and told him that the records showed he had no less than three ancestral relatives who had fought in the great conflict and asked if he'd be interested in meeting these personages, he replied that Yes, of course, he would love to meet them.

What Southerner wouldn't say that?

It is also in the Southern manner to take the marvels of modern technology for granted. The crisp impersonal female voice in the telephone receiver explained that from the merest microscopic section of bone computers could

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dredge out of the past not only the physical lineaments of the person whom that bone once held perpendicular but the personality traits too, down to the last little tic and stammer. In their own house Harry and Lydie could engage with three flesh-and-blood examples of history come to life. Of course, it really wasn't flesh, only a sort of protein putty, but it was real blood, right enough. It was pig blood: that was a biochemical necessity.

"Can they talk?" Harry asked and was assured that they spoke, remembered their former lives in sharp detail, and even told jokes—rather faded ones, of course. They also ate, slept, and shaved, were human in every way. "That is the Departmental motto," the voice said. "Engineering Humanity for Historic Purpose."

He asked casually about the cost, and she stated it and he was pleased, but still desired to think just a few days about whether to subscribe to the program.

"That will not be necessary," said the woman's voice. "The arrangements have already been taken care of and your first ancestor is on his way to you. The Archives and History Division of the United States Department of Reality is certain that you will find real satisfaction in your encounters with Living History. Good day, Mr. Butcher."

"Wait a minute," Harry said. "My name is Beacham." But the connection was cut and when he tried to call back he was shunted from one office to another and put on hold so often and so long that he gave up in disgust.

So then as far as Harry was concerned all bets were off. He was a Beacham and no Butcher and proud of it and if some artificial entity from the Archives Division showed up at his door he would send the fellow packing.

But he didn't have to do that. Lieutenant Aldershot's papers were in apple-pie order when he presented them with a sharp salute to Lydie. She met him at the front door and was immediately taken with this swarthy brown-eyed man in his butternut uniform and broadbrimmed hat. A battered leatherbound trunk sat on the walk behind him.

"Oh, you must be the ancestor they sent," she said.

"Lieutenant Edward Aldershot of the Northern Virginia reporting as ordered, ma'am."

Confused, Lydie colored prettily and looked up and down the lane to see if any of her neighbors here in the Shining Acres development were observing her resplendent visitor. She took the papers he proffered, started to open them, but paused with her fingers on the knotted ribbon and said, "Oh, do come in," and stepped back into the foyer. The lieutenant moved forward briskly, removing his hat just before he stepped over the threshold. "Honey," she called, "Harry, honey. Our ancestor is here."

He came downstairs in no pleasant frame of mind, but then stood silent and wide-eyed before Aldershot who snapped him a classy respectful salute and declared his name and the name of his army. "I believe the lady will be kind enough to present my papers, sir."

But Harry and Lydie only stood gaping until the lieutenant gestured toward the packet in Lydie's hands. She gave it to Harry, blushing again, and Harry said in a rather stiff tone, trying to hide his astonishment, "Ah yes. Of course . . . Your papers. . . . Of course."

And for a wonder they were all correct. Here was the letter from History identifying Aldershot and congratulating the Beachams on the opportunity of enjoying his company for three weeks and telling them what a valuable experience they were in for. Then there was Aldershot's birth certificate and a very sketchy outline of his military career and then a family tree in which Harry was relieved to discover not a single Butcher. It was all Beachams and Lawsons and Hollinses and Bredvolds and Aldershots and Harpers as far as the eye could see, all the way to the beginning of the 19th century.

"This looks fine," Harry said. "We're glad to have you as one of us."

"I'm proud to hear you say so, sir," the lieutenant said and tore off another healthy salute.

"You don't need to be so formal," Harry told him. "You don't have to salute me or call me sir. We're just friends here."

"That's very kind of you. I'm afraid it may take a little time for me to adjust, sir."

"You'll fit right in," Lydie said. "I'm sure you will."

"Thank you, ma'am," said Aldershot. "I do take tobacco and a little whiskey now and then. I hope you won't mind."

"Oh no. If that's what you did—I mean, if that's what you're used to. Please feel free." A bashful woman, she blushed once more. She had almost said: *If that's what you did when you were alive*. "Harry, you can bring in the lieutenant's trunk, if you don't mind."

The Confederate officer had too modestly described his pleasures. He did not merely take tobacco, he engorged it, sawing off with his case knife black tarry knuckles of the stuff from a twist he carried in his trousers pocket and chewing belligerently, like a man marching against an opposing brigade. He was a veritable wellpump of tobacco juice, spitting inaccurately not only at the champagne bucket and other utensils the Beachams supplied him as spittoons but at any handy vessel that offered a concavity. The sofa suffered and the rugs, the tablecloths, the lieutenant's bedding and his clothing—his clothing most of all.

In fact, his whole appearance deteriorated rapidly and ruinously. In three days he no longer wore his handsome butternut but had changed into the more familiar uniform of Confederate gray, a uniform which seemed to grow shabbier even as the Beachams gazed upon it. His sprightly black moustache, which Lydie had fancied as complementing his dark eyes perfectly, became first ragged, then shaggy. He would neglect to shave for four days running and he began

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to smell of sweat and stale underwear and whiskey.

For he had also understated the power of his thirst. On the first night and always afterward he never strayed far from the jug and when not actually pouring from it would cast amorous glances in its direction. He drank George Dickel neat or sometimes with sugar water and praised the quality of the bourbon in ardent terms, saying, for example, "If we'd a-had a little more of this at Chancellorsville it would've been a different story." Liquor seemed to affect him little, however; he never lost control of his motor reflexes or slurred his speech.

Yet the quality of his address had changed since that sunny first moment with the Beachams. It was no more *Yes sir* and *No sir* to Harry, but *our friend Harry here* and *Old Buddy* and *Old Hoss*. He still spoke to Lydie as *Ma'am*, but when talking indirectly would refer to her as *our mighty fine little female of the house*. He was never rude or impolite, but his formal manner slipped into an easy camaraderie and then sagged into a careless intimacy. His social graces frayed at about the same rate as his gray uniform, which by the end of the second week was positively tattered.

The lieutenant, though, had not been ordered to the Beacham residence as a dancing master, but as a representative of History which, as the largest division of the Department of Reality, shared much of its parent organization's proud autonomy. And of Living History Lieutenant Aldershot offered a spectacular cornucopia. The outline of his career that came with him from the government agency barely hinted at the range and length of his fighting experience. He had fought at Vicksburg, Fredericksburg, and Gettysburg; he had survived Shiloh, Antietam, and Richmond; he had been brave at Bull Run, Rich Mountain, Williamsburg, and Cedar Mountain; he had won commendations from Zollicoffer, Beauregard, Johnston, Kirby-Smith, Jackson, and Robert E. Lee. The latter commander he referred to as "General Bobby" and described him as "the finest Southern gentleman who ever whupped his enemy."

Harry's knowledge of history was by no means as profound as his enthusiasm for it and he had not found time before Aldershot's arrival to bone up on the battles and campaigns that occurred a century and a half past. Even so, the exploits of the ambeer-spattered and strongly watered lieutenant began to overstretch his credulity. In order to be on all the battlefields he remembered Aldershot must have spent most of the War on the backs of two dozen swift horses and to survive the carnage he had witnessed must have kept busy a fretting cohort of guardian angels. Any soldier of such courage, coolness, intelligence, and resourcefulness must have left his name in letters of red blaze in the history books, but Harry could not recall hearing of Aldershot. Of course, it had been some seven years since he had looked at the histories; perhaps he had only forgotten.

For in many ways it was hard to disbelieve the soldier's accounts, he was so particular in detail and so vivid in expression. When telling of some incident that displayed one man's valor or another's timidity, he became brightly animated, and then heated, and would squirm in his chair at the table, sputtering tobacco and gulping bourbon, his eyes wild and bloodshot. He rocked back and forth in the chair as if he were in the saddle, leaping the brushy hurdles at the Battle of Fallen Timber. He broke two chairs that way, and his host supplied him a steel-frame lawn chair brought in from the garage.

He was vivid and particular most of all in his accounts of bloodshed. Although he spoke only plain language, as he averred a soldier should, he so impressed Harry's imagination and Lydie's trepidation that they felt extremely close to the great conflict. In Aldershot's bourbonish sentences they heard the bugles at daybreak, the creak of munitions wagons, the crack of rifles and bellow of canon, the horses screaming in pain and terror. They saw the fields clouded over with gunsmoke and the hilltop campfires at night and the restless shuffle of pickets on the sunset perimeters. They could smell corn parching and mud waist deep and the stink of latrines and the worse stink of gangrene in the hospital tents.

The lieutenant's accounts of battle went from bloody to chilling to gruesome, and the closeness with which he detailed blows and wounds and killings made the *Iliad* seem vague and pallid. He appeared to take a certain relish in demonstrating on his own body where a minnie ball had gone into a comrade and where it came out and what raw mischief it had caused during its journey. He spoke of shattered teeth and splintered bone and eyes gouged out. When he began to describe the surgeries and amputations, dwelling at great length on the mound of removed body parts at the Fredericksburg field hospital, Lydie pleaded with him to spare her.

"Please," she said. "Perhaps we needn't hear all this part." Her eyes were large and teary in her whitened face and her voice trembled.

"Uh, yes," Harry said. "I think Lydie has a point. Maybe we can skip a few of the gorier details now and then." He too was obviously shaken by what he had heard.

"Well now," Aldershot said, "of course I didn't mean to alarm our mighty fine little female of the house. I hope you'll forgive a plainspoken soldier, ma'am, one who never learned the orator's art. You're a brave un in my book, for there's many a refined Southern lady who will faint when she hears the true story of things. Especially when I tell how it is to be gutshot."

"Please, Lieutenant," Lydie said. She took three sips of her chardonnay, recovering her composure pretty quickly, but looking with dismay at her plate of stewed pork.

"How about you?" Harry asked. "Were you ever wounded?"

"Me?" Aldershot snorted. "No, not me. I was always one too many for them bluebellies, not that they didn't try plenty hard."

This discussion took place at the end of the second week. At first Aldershot had referred to his ancient opponents as *the enemy* and then changed his term to *the Northern invader*. In the second week, though, it was *bluebellies* every time, and in the third week it was *them goddam treacherous Yankee bastards*, to which epithet he always appended a parenthetical apology to Lydie:—*saving your presence, ma'am*.

Even that small gesture toward the observance of chivalry seemed to cost him some effort. In the third week the weary Confederate appeared to have aged a decade; his clothes were now only threads and patches, his moustache a

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scraggly bristle, his eyes discolored and dispirited, and his speech disjoined, exhausted, and crumbling. It was clear that remembering had taken too much out of him, that he had tired himself almost past endurance. He had cut down on his tobacco intake, as if the exercise of a chaw drew off too much strength, and had increased his frequency of whiskey, although this spiritous surplus did not enliven his demeanor.

On the eve of his departure, Lieutenant Aldershot begged off telling of the destruction of Atlanta and gave only the most cursory sketch of the surrender at Appomattox. For the first time in three weeks, he retired early to bed.

Next morning he came down late and took only coffee for his breakfast. He had dragged his leatherbound trunk to the front door and stood with his foot propped on it as he bade the Beachams farewell. Gravely they shook hands. When he spoke to Lydie Aldershot held his hat over his heart. "Ma'am, your hospitality has been most generous and not something a plain soldier will forget."

Lydie took his hand; she blushed, feeling that she ought to curtsey but not knowing how.

He looked straight into Harry's eyes. "So long, Old Hoss," he said. "It's been mighty fine for me here."

"We've been honored," Harry said. "Believe me."

Then the government van arrived and the driver came to load Aldershot's trunk and they shook hands once more and the lieutenant departed. As they watched him trudging down the front walk Harry and Lydie were struck silent by the mournful figure he presented, his shoulders slumped, his head thrust forward, and his step a defeated shuffle. When he mounted to the van cab and rode away without waving or looking back, a feeling of deep sadness descended upon them, so that they stood for a minute or two holding each other for comfort and looking into the bright empty morning.

Finally Harry closed the door and turned away. "I don't know about you," he said, "but I feel tired. Tired in my bones."

"Me too," Lydie said. "And I've got to get this house cleaned up. There's tobacco spit everywhere. Everything in the house is splattered."

"I feel like we just lost the war."

"Well, honey, that's exactly what happened."

"I'll tell you what I'm going to do—if you don't mind, I mean. I'm going to call these government History people and tell them not to send the other ancestors. I'm utterly exhausted. I can't imagine how I'd feel after two more visitors like the lieutenant."

"I think you're right," she said. "Do it now."

Harry got on the telephone and dialed a list of bureaucratic numbers, only to find that each and every one gave off a busy signal for hours on end.

So that on Monday morning, at ten-thirty on the dot, Private William Harper presented himself at the front door and handed his papers to Lydie with a shy bow. His was a diffident gray uniform that had seen better days, but it was clean and tidy. He was accompanied by no trunk; only a modest neatly turned bedroll lay at his feet. "Ma'am, I believe you are expecting me?" he said.

Her first impulse was to send him away immediately, but the van must have departed already since it was nowhere in sight, and, anyway, her second stronger impulse was to invite him into the house and feed him. Lieutenant Aldershot must have been in his early forties—though he had looked to be sixty years old when he departed—but Private Harper could hardly have been out of his teens.

He offered her his papers and gave her what he obviously hoped was a winning smile, but he was so young and clear-eyed and shy and apprehensive that his expression was more frightened than cordial.

Lydie's heart went out to him entirely; she took the packet without looking at it, staring almost tenderly upon Harper with his big bright blue eyes and rosy complexion in which the light fuzz was evidence of an infrequent acquaintance with a razor. He was a slight young man, slender and well-formed and with hands as long-fingered and delicate as a pianist's. He seemed troubled by her stare and shifted restlessly in his boots.

"Ma'am," he asked, "have I come to the right house? Maybe I'm supposed to be somewhere else."

"No," Lydie said. "You come right in. This is the place for you."

"I wouldn't want to be a burden," the private said. "Those government people said that you had invited me to come here. I wouldn't want to impose on you."

"We're glad to have you. Don't worry about a thing."

He looked all about him, wonderstruck. "You belong to a mighty grand place. It's hard for me to get used to the houses and everything that people have."

"We feel lucky," Lydie said. "Lots of people are not so well-off." Then, seeing that he could formulate no reply, she stooped and picked up his bedroll. "Please come in. I was just getting ready to make some fresh coffee. You'd like that, wouldn't you?"

"Yes ma'am."

In the kitchen Private Harper sat at the table and watched moonily every step and gesture Lydie made. His nervousness was subsiding, but he seemed a long way from being at ease. She took care to smile warmly and speak softly, but it was apparent to her from Harper's worshipful gaze that she had already conquered the young man's heart. When she set the coffee before him with the cream pitcher and sugar bowl alongside he didn't glance down, looking instead into her face. "Now, Private Harper," she said, "drink your coffee. And would you like something to eat? I can make a sandwich or maybe there's a piece of chocolate cake left. You like chocolate cake, don't you?"

"No ma'am. Just the coffee is all I want to wake me up. I was feeling a little bit tired."

"Of course you are," she said. "You finish your coffee and I'll show you to your room and you can get some sleep."

"You're awful kind, ma'am. I won't say No to that."

When the private was tucked away, Lydie telephoned her spouse at his place of business, Harry's Hot-Hit Vidrents, to tell him the news.

He was not happy. "Oh Lydie," he said. "You were supposed to send him back where he came from. That was our plan."

"I just couldn't," she said. "He's so young. And he was tired out. He's already asleep."

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"But we agreed. Don't you remember? We agreed to send him packing."

"Wait till you meet him. Then send him packing. If you can do it, it will be all right with me."

And having met the young man, Harry no more than Lydie could order him away. Harper was so innocent and willing and openfaced that Harry could only feel sympathy for him when he saw what puppy eyes the young man made at his wife. He offered the lad a drink—Aldershot had overlooked a half bottle of Dickel in a lower cabinet—and was not surprised when he refused. "I promised my mother, sir, before I went off to war."

"I see," Harry said, and reflected gravely on the difference between the lieutenant and the private. "But in the army that must have been a hard promise to keep."

"Oh no, sir. Not when I promised my mother. And to tell the truth, I don't have much taste for liquor."

He did accept a cup of tea, spooning into it as much sugar as would dissolve, and was profusely grateful.

Harry then readied himself with a gin and tonic for another stiff dose of History. "I suppose you must have fought in lots of battles," he said.

Private Harper shook his head sadly. "Only two battles, sir."

"Which were those?"

"Well, I fought at Bethel, sir, and then we were sent down toward Richmond."

"You were at Manassas?" These were place-names that Aldershot had deeply imprinted on the Beacham memory.

"Yes sir."

"And what was that like?"

"Well, sir . . ." For the first time Private Harper lifted his eyes and looked directly into Harry's face. His boyish countenance was a study in apologetic confusion as he steadied his teacup on his knee and said, "Well, sir, if you don't mind, I'd rather not talk 'bout that."

"You don't want to talk about Manassas?" Harry asked. Then his surprise disappeared with the force of his realization: Manassas would have been where Private Harper had died.

"I don't like to talk about the war at all, sir."

"I see."

"I know I'm supposed to, but I just can't seem to make myself do it. It opens up old wounds."

"That's all right. I understand."

"No, sir, I don't believe that you do understand. It is too hard for me right now. It opens old wounds."

"That's quite all right. Where are you from originally?"

"Salem, Virginia," Private Harper said. "We had a farm right outside town. I miss that place a great deal."

"I'm sure you do."

"I miss my folks too, sir. Something terrible." And he went on to talk about his life before the war and his story was so idyllic and engaging that Harry called Lydie from the kitchen to hear it.

The private spoke rhapsodically of such ordinary tasks as planting corn, shoeing horses, repairing wagons, cutting hay, milking cows and so forth; his bright face glowed even friendlier as he spoke of these matters, and as he warmed to his stories his shyness melted and his language became almost lyrical.

He was the only male in a female family, his father having died when Billy was only eleven. He allowed that his mother and three sisters had rather doted on him, but it was obvious to the Beachams that he had no real idea how much they doted. He had not been required to join the army; he had done so only out of a sense of duty and from a fear of the shame he might feel later if he did not join. He had supposed that the colored men attached to the family, Jupiter and Peter—who were not thought of as being slaves—would look after the ladies and take care of the farm. But shortly after Billy went away to war, those two had slipped off and were not heard of again. He had been in the process of applying for permission to return home when the Battle of Manassas befell him.

He seemed to remember mornings fondly, and summer mornings most fondly of all. To wake up to the smell of ham and coffee and biscuits and grits, to look off the front porch into the dew-shiny fields and to see the little creek in the bottom winking with gleam through the bushes—well, these sights made him feel that Paradise might be something of a letdown when finally at last he disembarked upon that lucent shore. The haze-blue mountains offered deer and partridge, possum and quail, and Billy loved to take his bay mare, Cleopatra, and his father's old long-barreled rifle and hunt on those slopes from morn till midnight.

About that mare he was rapturous. "If I told you how smart Cleo was, and some of the things I've known her to do, you'd think I was straying from the truth," he said. "But I'm not. She really is the best horse in the world, the smartest and the gentlest. Not that she doesn't have a lot of spirit. Why, I believe she has more courage than a bear, but she's as gentle with children as a mammy. And she's the best hunter I know of, bar none."

The Beachams smiled, trying vainly to imagine that Private Harper would deliberately stray from the truth; but it was clear that in regard to his horse his infatuation might fetch him out of the strait path of accuracy without his ever being aware. It seemed that Cleopatra knew where game was to be found up there in the hills and when given her head would unerringly seek out the best cover to shoot deer and fowl of every sort. There never was a horse like her for woodlore. Harry felt his credulity strained when Harper mentioned that she could also sniff out trout in the river and would carry her master to the sweetest fishing holes. And Lydie left unspoken her reservations about Billy's account of Cleo's stamping out a fire and thus saving the Harper farmhouse and barn and the lives of the four of them.

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A skeptical expression must have crossed her face, though, because Billy looked at her imploringly and said in the most earnest tone: "Oh, it's true, I assure you it is. You can ask Julie or Annie or my mother. They'll tell you it's gospel truth." Lydie realized then that she must keep her emotions out of her face, that Billy Harper always forgot that his family was sealed away in time past and that he was an orphan in a world of strangers.

He forgot himself so thoroughly when he spoke that his unhappy situation appeared to escape his memory. Yet something was troubling him. As the day went by he grew restless and his soft volubility began to lapse. Toward the end of the second week not even questions about Cleopatra could alleviate his distractedness.

On Monday of the third week he spoke his mind. "I know you-all want to hear about the war," he said glumly. "And I know that's what I'm supposed to be telling you. It's just that I can't bear to open up those wounds again. I guess I'd better try, though, since that's what I'm sent here to do."

"You're not supposed to do anything that you don't want to do," Harry said. "We haven't been notified that you are required to talk about the war. In fact, we haven't been notified of anything much. I wish I could get a phone call through to those History folks."

"That's right," Lydie said. "I'm tired of hearing about that ugly old war. I'd much rather hear about your mother and sisters and the farm."

Looking at the people who were obviously not sims, he saw written on their faces weariness, exasperation, sorrow, horror, guilt, and cruel determination—all the feelings he and Lydie had experienced for the past weeks.

All their reassurances could not lighten Billy's darkened spirits. The more they spoke soothing words, the gloomier he became, and they could see that he was steeling himself to broach the subject and they became anxious about him, for his nervousness increased as his determination grew.

When he began to talk, after supper on his third Wednesday, he was obviously desperate. His hands trembled and he kept his eyes trained on the beige patch of living room carpet in front of his armchair and he spoke in a low mutter. His sentences were jumbled and hard to understand. He was sweating.

"There were onlookers up on the ridges," he said. "We were down in the bottom fields there at Manassas when McDowell brought his troops around. We could see them up there, the spectators, I mean, and I borrowed Jed's glass and took a look and they were drinking wine and laughing and there were ladies in their carriages, and younguns too, setting off firecrackers. So when I handed him his glass back I said, 'I don't believe it's going to be a fight, not with the high society people looking on; I expect that McDowell and General Bee will parley.' And he said, 'No, it'll be a fight, Billy. Can't neither side back off now, we're in too close to each other. McDowell will have to fight here right outside of Washington because Lincoln hisself might be up there on a hilltop watching.' But I didn't believe him. I never thought we'd fight that day."

He paused and licked his lips and asked for a glass of water. Lydie brought it from the kitchen, ice cubes tinkling, and told the private with meaningful tenderness that he did not need to continue his story.

Harper took the glass and sipped, appearing not to hear her words. He kept his eyes downcast and began again. "At nine in the morning it was already warm and we knew we'd be feeling the heat and then with no warning it started up. Sergeant Roper hadn't no more than told us to brace ourselves because there appeared to be more Yankees here than ants in an anthill when we saw gunsmoke off to our left, a little decline there, and heard the shots and in that very first volley Jed fell down with a ball in the middle of his chest, but before he hit the ground took another one in his shoulder that near about tore his left arm off. I didn't have a least idea any of them was close enough to get a shot at us. I laid down by Jed and took him in my arms but couldn't do nothing and they made me let him lay and start fighting."

His face had been flushed and sweaty but now was sugar-white and drenched. His eyes wore dark circles and when he raised them for the first time, caught up as he was in his memories, he seemed not to see Lydie or Harry or anything around him. He was sweating so profusely his uniform was darkening—that was what Lydie thought at first, but then she rose to clutch Harry's arm. Blood was dripping from Harper's sleeve over his wrist and onto the rug.

"So I got on one knee to see what I could and brought my rifle up, but I didn't know what to do. I could tell they were all around us because my comrades were firing at them in every direction but I couldn't spot anything, so much smoke and dust. I saw some muzzle blazes on my right and thought I might shoot, but then maybe that was one of our lines over there. I was a pretty good marksman to go a-hunting, but in a battle I couldn't figure where to aim."

His voice had sunk almost to a whisper and his tunic and the chair he sat in were soaking with blood. Harry remembered that it would be pig blood and not human, but he was horrified all the same—more disturbed, perhaps, than if it had been Harper's own blood. He looked quickly at Lydie and then rushed to her aid. He knew now what Billy Harper had meant when he said that to talk about the war opened old wounds.

He took his wife by the arm and drew her toward the bedroom. She went along without a murmur, her face drawn and blanched. He could feel her whole body trembling. He helped her to lie down and told her to keep still, not to move; he would take care of everything, he said. It was going to be all right.

But when he returned to the living room Harper was lying face down on the floor. He had tumbled out of his chair and lay motionless in a thick smelly puddle of brownish blood. Harry knelt to examine him, and it was obvious that he was gone, literally drained of life.

Harry telephoned for an ambulance and sat down to

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think about what to tell the medics when they came. Perhaps they wouldn't accept Private Harper; perhaps they wouldn't regard him as a real human being. To whom could he turn for assistance in that case? He knew better than to call Archives and History; the last time he had called those numbers a recorded voice informed him that they had all been disconnected. Now he was trying to reach, by mail and telephone and fax machine, his congressman, Representative Doy Collingwood, but so far had received no reply.

When the ambulance came, though, the young paramedics understood the situation immediately and seemed to find it routine. The fellow with the blond-red mustache—he looked like a teenager, Harry thought ruefully—only glanced at the inert figure on the rug before asking, "Civil War?"

"Yes," Harry said. "My God, it was awful. My wife is almost hysterical. This is just terrible."

The fellow nodded. "We get them like this all the time. Faulty parts and sloppy workmanship. Sometimes we'll get four calls a week like this."

"Can't something be done?"

"Have you tried to get in touch with Ark & Hist?"

"With whom?"

"The Archives and History Division . . . in Washington," he asked, then saw Harry's expression. "Never mind, I know. Tell you what, though. I'd better have a look to see if your wife is okay. Where is she?"

Harry showed him the bedroom and stood by while he ministered to Lydie. She murmured her gratitude, but kept her eyes closed. The young medic gave her some pills to take and went with Harry back to the living room. "She'll be all right," he said. "Probably have a couple of rough nights."

The driver had already put down a stretcher and rolled Harper's body over onto it. His eyes were open and a dreadful change had come to his face, a change that was more than death and worse, a change that made Private Harper look as if he'd never been human—in this life or any other.

Harry had to look away. "My God," he said.

"Pretty awful, isn't it?" The medic's response was cheerful, matter-of-fact. "Shoddy stuff, these Ark & Hist sims. But there's some good salvage there, more than you'd think by looking at it."

"What did you call him? Harry asked. "Simms?"

"Sim. It's a nickname. A simulacrum from the Division of Archives and History. Your tax dollars at work, know what I mean? Sign here," he said, handing Harry a clipboard and a pen. "And here," he said, turning a page. "And here. And here. And here. And here. And here. And here. And here."

The medic had predicted rough nights for Lydie, but she suffered bad days as well and took to her bed. She kept the shades drawn and the lights down and watched chamber music on the vidcube. Harry gave his shop over to the attentions of two assistants and stayed home with his wife, preparing her scanty meals and consoling her and monitoring the installation of the new carpet and choosing a new chair for the living room. Lydie would probably hate the chocolate-colored wingback he'd bought, but that was all right. She could exchange it when she was up and around.

He planned to stay home with her for a week or two—for as long as it took to make certain that the government was sending to the Beacham household no more sims. Harry pronounced the word with an ugly angry hiss: *sssimsss*. He put as much disgust into the sibilants as his teeth could produce, but there was no satisfaction for him.

He was so infuriated and felt so impotent that he began to wish a new specimen would turn up, just so that he could send it away with a message for the people who had dispatched it. He prepared several speeches in his mind, each more savage than the last, each more heartfelt and more eloquent.

He never got to deliver any of them, even though the expected third visitor did after all show, a week later than had been stipulated. But he didn't announce himself, didn't knock at the door and present his papers as Aldershot and Harper had done. He just stood in the front yard with his back turned toward the house and gazed at the houses opposite and at the children riding bicycles and chasing balls along the asphalt lanes of Shining Acres. Often he would look at the sky, at the puffy cloud masses scooting overhead, and he would take off his big gray hat with the floppy brim and shade his eyes with his hand.

This hat was not of Confederate gray but of a lighter mineral color, nearly the same gray color as the man's clothing. Nor was his attire military; he wore cotton trousers held up by a broad leather belt and a soft woolen shirt with an open collar. When he removed his hat shining gray locks fell past his ears and the sunlight imparted to this mass of silver a whitish halo effect. He turned around to look at the Beacham house and Harry saw that he wore a glorious gray beard, clean and bright and patriarchal, and that his eyes were clear and warm.

Even from where Harry stood inside the man's gaze was remarkable: calm and trusting and unworried and soothing. When he replaced his hat Harry recognized his gesture as easy and graceful, neither sweeping nor constrained. There was a natural ease about his figure that put Harry's mind at rest. He would still send him away, of course he would, but Harry began to soften the speech he had planned to make, to modify its ferocity and to sweeten a little bit its bitterness.

But when had this fellow arrived? How long had he been standing there, observing the world from his casual viewing point, with his little gray knapsack lying carelessly on the lawn? He might have been there for hours; nothing in his manner would ever betray impatience.

Harry opened the door and called to the man. "Hey you," he said. "Hey you, standing in my yard."

The man turned slowly, presenting his whole figure as if he wished to be taken in from crown to shoesole, to be examined and measured for what he was as a physical being. "I am Wade Wordmore," he said and his voice was full of gentle strength. "I have come a great distance, overstepping time and space; I am the visitor who has been sent."

"Yeah, that's right," Harry said. "The government sent you, right? The History people? They sent you to the Beacham residence, right?"

"That is correct in some measure," said Wade Wordmore. "But I believe there is more to it than that."

"Well, go away," Harry said. "We don't want you. We've had enough—" He didn't finish the sentence he had planned to say; he found that he could not look into

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Wordmore's gaze and say, *We've had enough of you goddam sims to last us a lifetime.*

Ssssimssss.

"Gladly I go where I am wanted and unwanted," Wordmore said. "The world is my home, in it I am free to loaf and meditate, every particle is as interesting to me as every other particle, the faces of men and women gladden me as I journey."

"I don't mean for you to wander around like a stray dog," Harry said. "I mean, Go back where you came from. Go back to the government."

"But what to me are governments?" the gray man replied. "I, Wade Wordmore, American, untrammeled by boundaries, unfixed as to station, and at my ease in all climes and latitudes, answer to no laws save those my perfect nature (for I know I am perfect, how can a man tall and in pure health be not perfect?), and am powerful to overstep any border."

Here was a stumper. Harry had foreseen that Ark & Hist would send another defective simulacrum, but he had not imagined being put in charge of a bona fide grade-A blue ribbon lunatic. It was clear from Wordmore's manner as he stooped to take up his knapsack and sling it on his shoulder that he was willing to stroll out into a century he knew nothing about, utterly careless about what would happen to him for good or ill. And beyond this privileged residential suburb Wordmore's adventures would be mostly ill; his strange aspect and wild mode of speech would mark him as an easy victim to chicanery and violence alike.

"Oh, for God's sake," Harry said. There was no help for it. "For God's sake, come in the house."

As Wordmore stepped over the threshold he removed his floppy hat. But this gesture of deference only served to underscore a casual royalty of presence; he entered Harry's house as if he belonged there not as a guest but by right of ownership. "I am most grateful to you, sir, and to everyone else in the house. White or black, Chinaman or Lascar or Hottentot, they are all equal to me and I bid them good day."

"We're fresh out of those. There's no one here but me and my wife Lydie. She's not feeling well and she's not going to be pleased that I let you come in. I'll have some tall explaining to do."

But Lydie stood already in the hall doorway. She had drawn a bright floral wrapper over her nightgown, yet the cheerful colors only caused her face to look paler and her eyes more darkly encircled. She appeared feverish. "Oh Harry," she said softly, wearily.

"Honey—"

"Among the strong I am strongest," Wordmore said in a resonant steady voice that then quietened almost to a whisper: "Among the weak I am gentlest." He tucked his knapsack under his left arm and went to Lydie and took her hand and drew her forward as if he were leading her onto a ballroom floor. He placed her in the new chocolate-colored wingback chair and smiled upon her benevolently and gave her the full benefit of that gray-eyed gaze so enormous with sympathy.

She responded with a tremulous smile and then leaned back and closed her eyes. "I hope you will be nice to us," she said in a voice as small as the throbbing of a far-away cricket. "We've never harmed anybody, Harry and I. We just wanted to know about his ancestors who fought in the Civil War. I guess that wasn't such a good idea."

"You know," Harry said. "I don't recall hearing about any Wordmores in my family. Are you sure you're related to me?"

"Each man is my brother, every woman my sister," Wordmore stated. "To all I belong equally, disregarding none. In every household I am welcome, being full of health and good will and bearing peaceful tidings for all gathered there."

At these words Lydie opened her eyes, then blinked them rapidly several times. Then she gave Harry one of the most reproachful glances one spouse ever turned upon another.

In a moment, though, she closed her eyes again and nestled into the wingback. Harry could see that she was relaxing, her breathing slowed now and regular. Wordmore emitted a powerful physical aura, an almost visible emanation of peaceful healthful ease. Harry wondered if the man might have served as a physician in the War. Certainly his presence was having a salubrious effect upon Lydie and Harry decided it would be all right to have Wordmore around for a few hours longer. If he was a madman he was harmless.

"Can I offer you a drink?" Harry asked. "We still have some bourbon left over from an earlier ancestor."

"I drink only pure water from the spring gushing forth," Wordmore replied. "My food is ever of the plainest and most wholesome."

"Tap water is all we've got," Harry said.

"I will take what you offer, I am pleased at every hospitality." He turned his attention to Lydie, placing his delicate freckled hand on her forehead. "You will soon be strong again," he told her. "Rest now and remember the summer days of your youth, the cows lowing at the pasture gate and the thrush singing in the thicket and the haywain rolling over the pebbled road with the boys lying in the hay, their arms in friendship disposed around one another."

Lydie smiled ruefully. "I can't remember anything like that," she said. "I grew up in Chicago. It was mostly traffic and street gangs fighting with knives."

"Remember then your mother," Wordmore said. "Remember her loving smile as over your bed she leant, stroking your hair and murmuring a melody sweet and ancient. Remember her in the kitchen as the steam rose around her and the smell of bread baking and the fruits of the season stewed and sugared, their thick juices oozing."

Lydie opened her eyes and sat forward. "Well, actually," she explained, "my parents divorced when I was five and I didn't see much of either of them after that. Only on holidays when one of them might visit at my convent school."

He was not to be discouraged. "Remember the days of Christmas then, when you and your comrade girls, tender and loving, waited for the gladsome step in the foyer—"

"It's all right," Lydie said firmly. "Really. I don't need to remember anything. I feel much better. I really do."

Harry returned with the ice water and looked curiously at the duo. "What's been going on?" he asked, "What are you two talking about?"

"Mr. Wordmore has been curing me of my ills," Lydie

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said.

The gray man nodded placidly, even a little smugly. "It is a gift that I have, allotted me graciously at my birth, as it was given to you and you, freely offered to all." He sipped his water.

"To me?" Harry asked. "I don't think I've got any healing powers. Business is my line; I own a little video rental shop."

"Business too is good," Wordmore said. "The accountant weary, arranging his figures at end of day, his eyeshade pulled over his furrowed brow and the lamplight golden on the clean-ruled page, and the manager of stores, the keeper of inventories, his bunched iron keys jangling on his manly thigh—"

"Well, it's not quite like that," Harry said. "I can see what you're getting at, though. You think business is okay, the free enterprise system and all."

"All trades and occupations are equal and worthy, the fisherman gathering in his nets fold on fold, and the hog drover with his long staff and his boots caked with fine delicious muck, and the finder of broken sewer pipes and the emptier of privies—"

"Yes, yes," Harry interrupted. "You mean that it's a good thing everybody has a job to do."

Wordmore smiled warmly and took another sip of water, gently shaking the glass to enjoy the jingle of the ice cubes.

"Maybe it's time we thought about making dinner," Harry said. "I'm not a bad cook. I'm sure Lydie would rather stay and talk to you while I rustle up something to eat."

"Oh no!" she exclaimed. "That would never do. I feel fine. I'll go right in and start on it."

"I wish you wouldn't," Harry said. "You ought to be resting."

"Honey," said Lydie with unmistakable determination, "you're going to be the one to stay here and talk to Mr. Wordmore. I don't care how much I have to cook."

"My food is ever of the plainest," Wordmore intoned. "The brown loaf hearty from the oven, its aromas arising, and the cool water from the mountain spring gushed forth—"

"Right," Lydie said. "I think I understand."

They knew pretty well what to expect at dinner and Wordmore didn't surprise them, drinking sparely and nibbling vegetables and discoursing in voluminous rolling periods upon any subject that was brought up—except that he never managed to light precisely upon the topic at hand, only somewhere in the scattered vicinity. Yet it was soothing to listen to him: his sentences which at first were so warm and sympathetic and filled with humane feeling and calm loving-kindness lost their intimacy after a while. They seemed to become as impersonal and distant as some large sound of nature: the muffled roar of a far-off waterfall or wind in the mountaintop balsams or sea waves lapping at a pebbled beach. His unpausing talk was not irritating because his good will was unmistakable; neither was it boring because the Beachams soon learned not to listen to it for content and took an absentminded pleasure in the mere sound of it. Harry thought of it as a kind of verbal Muzak and wondered how Wordmore had been perceived by his contemporaries. They must have found him as strange an example of humankind as Harry and Lydie did.

On the other hand they must have got on well with him. He'd make a good neighbor, surely, because he never had a bad word for anyone. He had no bad words at all, not a smidgen of disapproval for anything, as far as they could discern. If potatoes were mentioned Wordmore would go a long way in praise of potatoes; if it was bunions they too were champion elements of the universe, indispensable. Housefly or horsefly, rhododendron or rattlesnake, Messiah or mosquito—they all seemed to hold a high place in the gray man's esteem; to him the world was a better place for containing any and all of them.

He went on so placidly in this vein that Harry couldn't resist testing the limits of his benignity. "Tell me, Mr. Wordmore—"

"Among each and every I am familiar, the old and the young call me by my First-Name," Wordmore said. "The children climb on my lap and push their hands into my beard, laughing."

"Sure, all right. Wade. Tell me, Wade, what was the worst thing you ever saw? The most terrible?"

"Equally terrible and awesome in every part is the world, the lightnings that jag the antipodes, the pismire in its—"

"I mean, personally," Harry explained. "What's the worst thing that ever happened to you?"

He fell silent and meditated. His voice when he spoke was heavy and sorrowful. "It was the Great Conflict," he said, "where I ministered to the spirits of the beautiful young men who lay wounded and sick and dying, their chests all bloody-broken and—"

"Harry!" Lydie cried. "I won't listen to this."

"That's all right," Harry said quickly. "We don't need to hear that part, Wade. I was just wondering what kinds of things you might think were wrong. Bad, I mean."

"Bad I will not say, though it was terrible, the young men so fair and handsome that I wished them hale again and whole that we might walk to the meadows together and there show our love, the Divine Nimbus around our bodies

playing—"

"Whoa," Harry said. "Wait a minute now."

"Are you gay?" Lydie asked. She leaned forward, her interest warmly aroused. "I didn't think there used to be gay people. In Civil War times, I mean."

"My spirits are buoyant always, with the breeze lifting, my mind happy and at ease, a deep gaiety overtakes my soul when I behold a bullfrog or termite—"

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"No, now. She means—well, *gay*," Harry said. "Are you homosexual?"

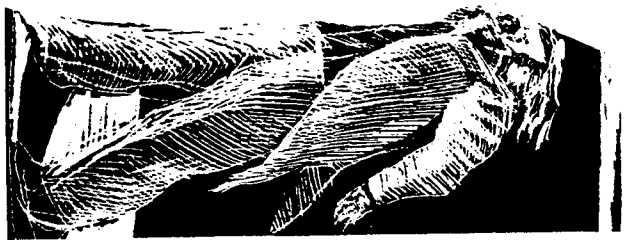
"To me sex, the Divine Nimbus, every creature exhales and I partake willingly, my soul gladly joining, my body locked in embrace with All, my—"

"All?" Henry and Lydie spoke in unison.

Wordmore nodded. "All, yes, All, sportively I tender my—"

"Does this include the bullfrog and the termite?" Harry asked.

"Yes," Wordmore said without hesitation. "Why should every creature not enjoy my manliness? Whole and hearty I am Wade Wordmore, American, liking the termite equally with the—"



"Wade, my friend," Harry said. "You old-time fellows sure do give us modern people something to think about. I'd like you to meet my congressman and give him the benefit of some of your ideas. Tomorrow I'm going to drive you over to the state capital and introduce you. How would you like that?" He slipped Lydie a happy wink.

"The orators and statesmen are ever my camaradoes," Wordmore said. "I descry them on the high platform, the pennons of America in the wind around them flying, their lungs in-taking the air, and the words outpouring."

"It's a date then," Harry said. "Pack your knapsack for a long stay. I intend for you and him to become fast friends."

But when they arrived in Raleigh the next day and Harry drove around toward Representative Collingwood's headquarters, he found the streets blocked with cars honking and banging fenders and redfaced policemen trying to create some sort of order and pattern. The sidewalks too were jammed with pedestrians, most of them dressed in the uniform of the Army of the Confederate States of America.

Ssssimssss.

"My God," Harry said. He could not have imagined that so many people had subscribed to the Ancestor Program, that so many simulacra had been produced. Looking at the people who were obviously not sims, he saw written on their faces weariness, exasperation, sorrow, horror, guilt, and cruel determination—all the feelings he and Lydie had experienced for the past weeks, the feelings he now felt piercingly with Wordmore sitting beside him, babbling on about the Beautiful Traffic Tangles of America.

Finally a channel opened and he rolled forward, to be stopped by a tired-looking policeman.

Harry thumbed his window down and the officer leaned in.

"May I see who is with you, sir?" he asked.

"This is Wade Wordmore," Harry said. "You'd find it hard to understand how glad he is to meet you."

"I am Wade Wordmore," said the graybeard, "and glad of your company, admiring much the constable as he goes his rounds—"

"Well, I'm glad you like company," the policeman said. "You're going to have plenty of it." He turned his bleared gaze on Harry. "We're shifting all the traffic to the football stadium parking lot, sir, and we're asking everyone to escort their ancestors onto the field."

"Is everybody bringing them in?" Harry asked.

"Yes sir, almost everyone. It seems like everybody ran out of patience at the same time. They've been coming in like this for three days now."

"I can believe it," Harry said. "What is the History Division going to do with them all?"

"There is no longer a History Division," the policeman said. "In fact, we just got word a while ago that the government has shut down the whole Reality Department."

"They shut down Reality? Why did they do that?"

"They took a poll," the policeman replied. "Nobody wanted it."

"Good Lord," Harry said. "What is going to happen?"

"I don't know, sir, but I'm afraid I'll have to ask you to move along."

"Okay, all right," Harry said. He drove on a few feet, then stopped and called back: "I've got an idea. Why don't we ship all these sims north to the Union states? After all, they're the ones who killed them in the first place."

"I'm afraid that those states have the same problem we do," the policeman said. "Please, sir, do move along. There will be someone at the stadium to give you instructions."

"Okay. Thanks." He rolled the window up and edged the car forward.

Wordmore had fallen silent, looking in openmouthed wonder at all the cars and the Confederate soldiers streaming by and mothers and children white-faced and weeping and dogs barking and policemen signaling and blowing whistles.

"You know," Harry said, "I just never thought about the Yankees wanting to meet *their* ancestors, but of course they would. It's a natural curiosity. I guess it must have seemed like a good idea to bring all this history back to life, but now look. What are we going to do now?" The station wagon in front of him moved and Harry inched forward.

"The history of the nation I see instantly before me, as on a plain rolling to the mountains majestic, like a river rolling, the beautiful young men in their uniforms with faces scarce fuzzed with beard—"

But Harry was not listening. His hands tightened on the steering wheel till the knuckles went purple and white. "My God," he said. "We've got all our soldiers back again and the Yankees have got theirs back. War is inevitable. I believe we're going to fight the whole Civil War over again. I'll be damned if I don't."

"—the beautiful young men falling in battle amid smoke of cannon and the sky louring over, the mothers weeping at night and the sweethearts weeping—"

"Oh, shut up, Wordmore. I know how terrible it is. It's too horrible to think about." He remembered Lieutenant Aldershot and Private Harper and a gritty tight wry little smile crossed his face. "Bluebellies," Harry said. "This time we'll show them." ◈

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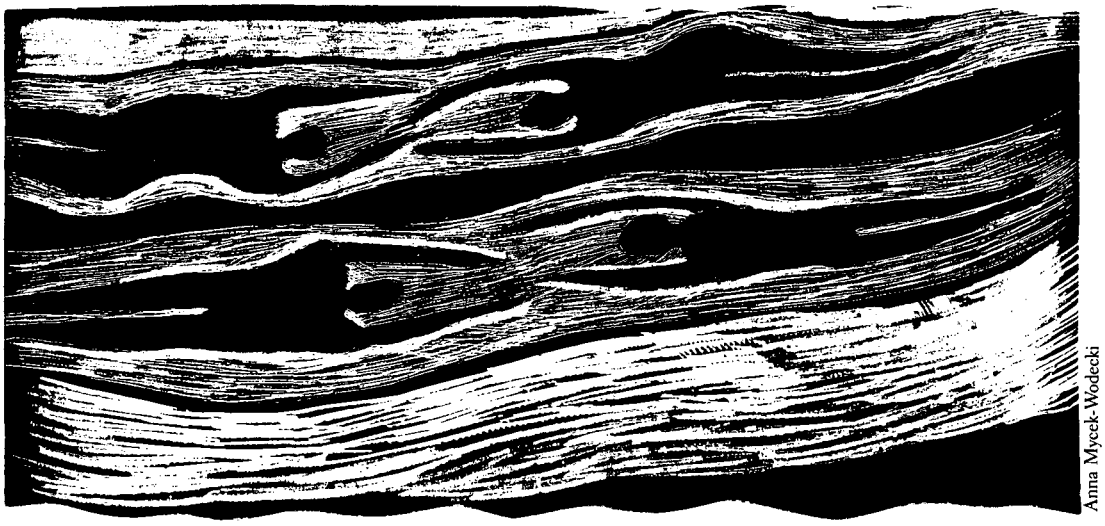
Time and the Tide in the Southern Short Story

by Madison Smartt Bell



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Perhaps since the War Between the States itself, and certainly since the literary Southern Renascence became conscious of itself in the 30's and 40's, educated Southerners, and Southern writers especially, have taken their sense of history as a point of pride. Now, as the end of the century approaches, one may be tempted to wonder whether this pride has degenerated into mere vanity—declining from the deadliest of sins to a mere venal one. That special Southern historical sense may have become no more than a conventional piety of a style of Southern literary criticism, which, as the novelist Madison Jones was heard to mutter in the audience of a critical panel five years ago, has long since passed "beyond refinement."

In any event, the deep sense of history is less likely to be associated with short Southern stories than with big Southern novels: Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha opus, Robert Penn Warren's excursion to the regional past, *Roots* even, or George Garrett's Elizabethan trilogy; those last two works carry a sharpened awareness of history into other regions altogether. Short stories, on the other hand, are not expected to express the long continuum from past into present, although they very well can, and sometimes still do.

The two surviving elder statesmen of the Southern short story, Eudora Welty and Peter Taylor, have moved in quite drastically different directions in their use of time in their work. In this narrow sense, Miss Welty's stories appear to be more conventional, by contemporary standards. The span of time they typically seek to portray is brief: the day, the hour, the moment. Their effect is an immediate effect. Although there are powerful historical currents running through many of Miss Welty's stories, their channels are mostly subterranean.

Madison Smartt Bell, a Tennessean, is the author of The Washington Square Ensemble *and* Soldier's Joy, *among other books. His most recent novel,* Doctor Sleep *(Harcourt Brace Jovanovich), was published in January.*

So it is with "The Hitch-Hikers," one of her best (each of her stories is one of her best). The traveling salesman Harris is a desperately dislocated man who can only recognize his condition by contrast to the two tramps he picks up in his car, whose language itself reflects a certainty of identity that Harris can in no way match: "I come down from the hills. . . . We had us owls for chickens and fox for yard dogs but we sung true." After Harris stops for the night in a hotel, the two tramps quarrel over a scheme to make off with his car, and one of them kills the other by clubbing him with a bottle. What could it mean to a man like Harris?

> In his room, Harris lay down on the bed without undressing or turning out the light. He was too tired to sleep. Half blinded by the unshaded bulb he stared at the bare plaster walls and the equally white surface of the mirror above the empty dresser. Presently he got up and turned on the ceiling fan, to create some motion and sound in the room. It was a defective fan which clicked with each revolution, on and on. He lay perfectly still beneath it, with his clothes on, unconsciously breathing in a rhythm related to the beat of the fan.

One would hardly wish to be any nearer a moment than this. Of course it is a distinctly null moment. It is frozen, except for the clocklike sound and movement of the fan, which insists on the story's oppressive proximity to real time.

> He could forgive nothing in this evening. But it was too like other evenings, this town was too like other towns, for him to move out of this lying still clothed on the bed, even into comfort or despair. Even the rain: there was often rain, there was often a party, and there had been other violence not of his doing—other fights, not quite so pointless, but fights in his car; fights, unheralded confessions, sudden lovemaking—none of any of this his, not

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> his to keep, but belonging to the people of these towns he passed through, coming out of their rooted pasts and their mock rambles, coming out of their time. He himself had no time. He was free; helpless.

This may be Miss Welty's clearest image of a future that she foresaw a long time ago, and that we have now inherited. Once the man of the future (like Tate's George Posy) the deracinated Harris is now very much the man of the present. It is noteworthy that the eternal present which he inhabits is in the story's scheme of things a sort of hell on earth. In its very unity of effect, the story conveys a wholesale loss of history. Not all Miss Welty's stories are about this kind of loss. But most of them do work within a very compact temporal period. The history that struggles so energetically to force itself upward into the present moment is implied more than it is stated, even in a story so rich with history, as, for example, "Clytie."

The majority of Southern storywriters have and still do follow a similar technical pattern—working very tightly to packets of real time. Flannery O'Connor certainly did so, for reasons probably more religious than aesthetic. Her stories reside in a perpetual state of eschatological apprehension—each moment is potentially that when the soul will be summoned to judgment. O'Connor's work is ahistorical, then, from the moment of its conception. Another, less dogmatic moral fabulist, George Garrett, also sticks close to clock and calendar in his short fiction, which is often complicated, however, by the presence of a ghostly voice that floats above the action and ranges more freely through larger chronologies than the action details. A younger generation of short-story writers has adopted these methods of managing time within strict limits, probably without question, for the most part.

In increasingly dramatic contrast to this general tendency is the work of Peter Taylor, who by moving in a different direction has discovered very different possibilities. Peter Taylor is quintessentially a storywriter: his recent novel, *A Summons to Memphis*, is simply a longer and more detailed version of his old story *Dean of Men*. As a storywriter he has certain important abilities that scarcely anyone else in the South or anywhere else in America appears to possess or even desire.

Each of Taylor's stories has the potential of a novel. Many cover the amount of real time that a novel would address—a long novel, too, a "saga." Taylor's gift is for engaging, convincing, compelling summary. He is able to make his stories account for the whole lives of their characters—and not through the flashbacks or the short bursts of background exposition that real-time stories conventionally employ. In reading a Taylor story one seems to pass through the lives of the characters alongside them, so that when the present moment is reached it is all the more potent with meaning. The short story is Taylor's ideal form because of his extraordinary ability to fuse a long chronology with some particularly revealing instant, as in his masterpiece (one of them) "A Wife of Nashville."

> Helen Ruth put her hands on the handlebar of the teacart. She pushed the cart a little way over the tile floor but stopped when he repeated his question. It wasn't to answer his question that she stopped, however. "Oh, my dears!" she said, addressing her whole family. Then it was a long time before she said anything more. John R. and the three boys remained seated at the table, and while Helen Ruth gazed past them and toward the front window of the sun parlor, they sat silent and still, as though they were in a picture. What could she say to them, she kept asking herself. And each time she asked the question, she received for answer some different memory of seeming unrelated things out of the past twenty years of her life. These things presented themselves as answers to her question, and each of them seemed satisfactory to her. But how little sense it would make to her husband and her grown sons, she reflected, if she should suddenly begin telling them about the long hours she had spent waiting in that apartment at the Vaux Hall while John R. was on the road for the Standard Candy Company, and in the same breath should tell them how plainly she used to talk to Jane Blakemore and how Jane pretended the baby made her nervous and went back to Thornton. Or suppose she should abruptly remind John R. of how ill at ease the wives of his hunting friends used to make her feel and how she had later driven Sarah's worthless husband out of the yard, threatening to call a bluecoat. What if she should suddenly say that because a woman's husband hunts, there is no reason for *her* to hunt, any more than because a man's wife sews, there is reason for him to sew. She felt that she would be willing to say anything at all, no matter how cruel or absurd it was, if it would make them understand that everything that happened in life only demonstrated in some way the lonesomeness that people felt. She was ready to tell them about sitting in the old nursery at Thornton and waiting for Carrie and Jane Blakemore to come out of the cabin in the yard. If it would make them see what she had been so long in learning to see, she would even talk about the "so much else" that had been missing from her life and that she had not been able to name, and about the foolish mysteries she had so nobly accepted upon her reconciliation with John R. To her, these things were all one now; they were her loneliness, the loneliness from which everybody, knowingly or unknowingly, suffered. But she knew that her husband and her sons did not recognize her loneliness or Jess McGehee's or their own.

There could be no more convincing illustration of the old Southern literary touchstone—that the past inhabits the present and is alive within it. There is also almost no other Southern storywriter capable of achieving such an effect, except for Elizabeth Spencer. Her latest collection, *Jack of Diamonds*, shows her adept at bringing twenty or thirty year blocks of familial history within the borders of a single story, like the extraordinary "Cousins"; however short such a story may be, the reader must feel that it has come a long, long

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Two Poems on Declension

by James Seay

1. Won't You Be Mine, Columbine?

More than once I've dreamed of draping the skins
of animals over my head and body.
I mean trying to get wholly within there.
As though I could trade
for a walk on the wild side
or maybe even be the thing
whose life was taken.
One woman laughed and liked it
when I put a pelt over my back
and got down on the rug
to make the mythic sounds,
or so I thought, dramatizing my dreams.
Thinking about it later,
I realized she would have warmed to things
if I'd pressed for something other
than rubbing our hands
over an animal skin
and talking the dream text
down to number, gender, and case.
There are tales that apply.
Like the one about the man
who couldn't find his ass
with both hands behind him.
True, true, you push that skin thing too far,
you end up in those movies with leather.
Still and all, a lot was lost
when we wandered into this grammar lust
and auto-hermeneutics.

2. The Reaching Back with Both Hands

Varro long ago
observed how *columba* served
as both male and female dove
until the breed became domestically blessed and important.
That's when the formal difference—*columbus*
and *columba*—was introduced to distinguish.
His point regarded the sporadic
changes of form as a norm
along with the long-standing.
What are we talking about?
Cock & hen, poetry & prose, tight-ass & knee-jerk,
and how it works in life or art, peace or war:
an evident difference ignored
until what we call
a practical need succeeds
in division by expression.
I don't like some of these lines
any more than you do;
it's easy to see why the convention changed.
As for the economics,
Varro cites his aunt
who once sold five thousand doves
for a return of sixty thousand sesterces.
The birds were served at a single banquet.
He describes the ground plan of the aviary
as shaped like a schoolboy's writing tablet,
rectangular with rounded head.
By the time the flusher Romans were finished
with the *villa rustica*, it was a pleasure dome.
They draped nature around their lives like skins,
the Roman coin talking
turkey with pure pastoral.
Sooner or later, Little Mister *Sine Qua Non*
had to have a name of his own.
Otherwise who would have sailed the ocean blue?
What are we talking about?
Maybe it's all finally phallephoric.
Or like what my sons used to say
when I asked them why a movie
they wanted permission to see was rated R:
sex drugs rock & roll,
the oldest declension, *mutatis mutandis*, of all.

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way through time to reach the present.

Why this quality is now so rare among younger and newer Southern storywriters is a mystery whose solution may be suggested by the probability that the Southern writer's education now takes place not in splendidly romantic isolation but in some writers' workshop somewhere. Creative Writing instruction has been too carelessly demonized of late; good workshops do more good than harm, bad ones the reverse, but all workshops do tend to function as behavioral training modules, where apprentice writers are in one way or another rewarded for success and punished for failure. The most basic success expected of them is verisimilitude, which is more easily gained by the novice through action and dialogue than by summary. Thus the trainee writer is apt to be discouraged from ever attempting to write the sort of brilliant summary at which Taylor and Elizabeth Spencer excel, although, as Andrew Lytle has observed, "fiction *is* a summary—summary of scenes leading up to the scene which you need." The specifically scenic quality of fiction, its real-time component, Lytle regards as a borrowing from theater. Nothing wrong with that method—Welty, O'Connor, and Garrett have written their finest stories in this mode—except that its limits are arbitrary.

There are still exceptions to this rule to be found—a few Southern storywriters who have found some highly unusual ways of breaking the constraint of real time. Richard Dillard, in long stories like "The Bog," "The Road," "The Death-eater," and "Omniphobia," has pretty well managed to smash the clock altogether with his signature blend of truly comic and truly frightening surrealism. In a somewhat similar vein, Cathryn Hankla and Fred Chappell have in their different ways used highly unusual techniques to encapsulate personal history. The title story of Hankla's first collection, *Learning the Mother Tongue*, ties the history of a childhood to the acquisition of language; in another, the narrator's life story is cunningly summarized by a parrot. In Chappell's *I Am One of You Forever*, stories that seem firmly grounded in a verisimilar here and now can suddenly, vastly enlarge their temporal scope by dextrous shifts into the fantastic:

> The tear on my mother's cheek got larger and larger. It detached from her face and became a shiny globe, widening outward like an inflating balloon. At first the tear floated in air between them, but as it expanded took my mother and father into itself. I saw them suspended, separate but beginning to drift slowly toward one another. Then my mother looked past my father's shoulder, looked through the bright skin of the tear, at me. The tear enlarged until at last it took me in too. It was warm and salt. As soon as I got used to the strange light inside the tear, I began to swim clumsily toward my parents.

Dillard, Hankla, and Chappell are mavericks, uniquely innovative stylists who seem to come out of nowhere, but if any younger writer can write the profoundly historical story in the same grand old manner, it is Richard Bausch, in his latest collection, *The Fireman's Wife*. "Letter to the Lady of the House," which elegantly evokes the sweet and the sour of a five-decade-long marriage, might in its technique and its tone almost be a deliberate homage to Peter Taylor. In stories of a more contemporary feeling, "The Brace," "Equity," and the title story, Bausch displays the different ways he's discovered for bringing a long history forward to the moment where it matters most.

And in that skill he is almost alone, at least in his generation. If the Southern short story is by and large losing its peculiar historical sense, then what is it that makes it peculiarly Southern? That question, academic or not, tends to come up in quarters where the old touchstones are fondled—asked by younger writers and critics like David Madden and Marc Stengel who seem to feel that the literature promoted under the Southern label is becoming increasingly remote from the realities of present-day Southern life. It's a subject that can hardly help but arise at a time when the South, demographically, and culturally, is losing a great deal of its separateness. "Personally," Richard Ford has said in a *Harper's* article, "I think there is no such thing as Southern writing or Southern literature or Southern ethos. . . . What 'Southern writing' has always alibied for, of course, is *regional* writing—writing with an asterisk. The minor leagues."

Ford, whose collection *Rock Springs* was certainly one of the most critically successful volumes of the last decade, seems to have largely succeeded in his effort to disassociate himself from what he conceives as the curse of regionalism. His wish to do so is roughly congruent with the nature of his work: to tell and retell the story of a drifter who begins in a state of total moral isolation. For the typical Ford protagonist, the deracination of Miss Welty's Harris is carried to the *n*th degree, though the Ford character will make a more strenuous effort to invent his own rules for honorable living within that condition.

"And by Southern literature, what would we mean, anyway?" Ford asks. "Writing just by Southerners? Or just writing about the South? Could we also mean writing by people born in the South but living elsewhere? Or writing by people not born in the South but living there? Would writing by Southerners on non-Southern subjects also qualify?" One need not share Ford's disparaging attitude toward "*regional* writing" to think these are all very good questions.

It's not only Southerners, now or ever, who know how to do the regional. But the new popularity of regional fiction, all over, provides a salutary counterbalance to the powerful waves of homogenization that keep sweeping the country again and again. There are always temptations for Southern writers to indulge in "mainstreaming," after the fashion of Bobbie Ann Mason's schooling herself to write rulebook *New Yorker* stories with a Southern flavoring. On the other hand there are several young women writers whose stories are authentically, intransigently rooted in their places. "Bypass" is a lovely example from Lisa Koger's first collection, *Farlanburg Stories*, a volume that braids the relentless modernization of Southern life with much of the old agrarian ethic. That's a trick also brought off by Alyson Hagy in *Madonna on Her Back* and the recent *Hardware River*, two volumes that show an impressive range, from the classic in the traditional manner, "Mister Makes," to the

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more complex, multilayered and disturbing "Kettle of Hawks." This same admirable and dangerous stubbornness can be found in any story from Mary Hood's two collections, *And Venus Is Blue* and *How Far She Went*; indeed, there's something almost atavistic in her stories, heard sometimes as a spooky echo of the voice of Flannery O'Connor.

There are ironies, too, that lie close to the surface of this renewed regionalism. The funny thing is that anyone can do it now, or anyone can try. Mary Hood, whose work is so unmistakably Southern, makes a point of mentioning she's half from the north: "I am like Laurie Lee's fabulous two-headed sheep, which could 'sing harmoniously in a double voice and cross-question itself for hours.'" Native New Jerseyite Alan Cheuse shows what handy turns he can do on the Southern theme in his new collection, *The Tennessee Waltz*. Moving in the opposite direction, Kelly Cherry shows in her recent "novel-in-stories" (*My Life and Doctor Joyce Brothers*) what ordinary Middle American angst feels like when a transplanted Southern woman experiences it. The incomparably powerful novelist Percival Everett, still underrecognized perhaps because people are afraid of him, has in *The Weather and the Women Treat Me Fair* put his own stamp on the Southern short story on the move into the American Northwest, or wherever. Then there are new kinds of stories in the works based on new and extraordinary circumstances of Southern living—like Robert Olin Butler's story cycle about the Vietnamese communities of Louisiana.

Generally speaking, a certain sort of story of rural or small-town life is no longer exclusively Southern, if it ever was. That Southerners still know how to make this story new is excellently proved by, among others, Pinckney Benedict's justly celebrated volume, *Town Smokes*. But some of the themes once claimed as traditionally Southern have been reclaimed in recent work by Carolyn Chute and Robert Olmstead. And by John Dufresne, whose first collection, *The Way That Water Enters Stone*, is in spite of the unfortunate title one of the finest of the year. Dufresne, wherever he is from, can do Southern and New England voices with equal conviction. It becomes less place than issue that matters, and all over the new regional storywriting appear the survivors who have washed up into backwaters of the cultural mainstream that would smother them with its bland indifference. They have their common characteristics, Southern or not: an anger, a stubbornness, an indomitable individualism, and (how one comes back to it) a tragically gorgeous weakness for the sin of pride. As one of Alyson Hagy's characters puts it, "even the smallest streams will have their say."

One of the truisms of Southern literature is that its power comes from a radical sense of displacement—the state of being in the nation, but not of it. Because they are not shareholders in the American dream, this argument goes, Southern writers are better able to distinguish the ideal from the reality—a situation that has always been shared (uneasily) by American black and Jewish writers. If the lines of regional and ethnic writing are less clearly drawn than previously, the reason may be that American political life is now able to offer a strong dose of disillusionment, disenfranchisement even, to *all* Americans. It's funny, in a bitter way, how what is so bad for a nation can often be so good for its art. ©

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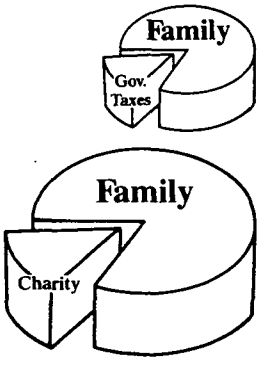

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Redefining America

by Lawrence Auster

"I began by feeling that I was a Norwegian, then changed into a Scandinavian, and have now arrived at being a generalized Germanic."
—Henrik Ibsen

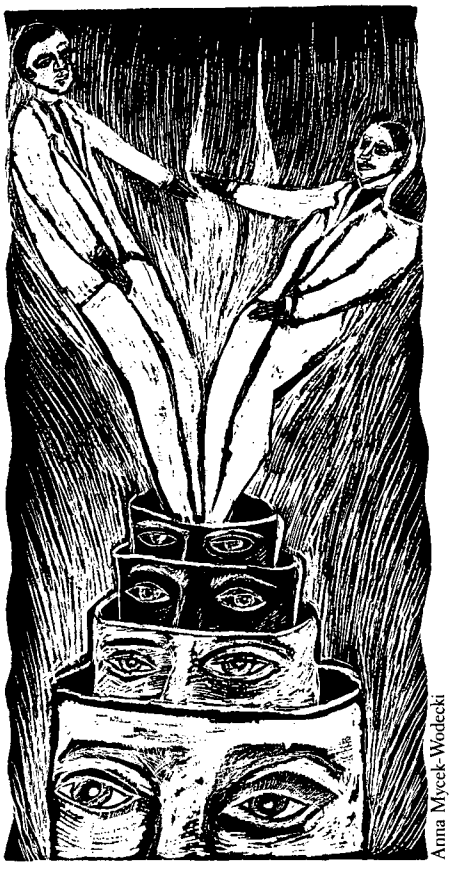
Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America
by Richard D. Alba
New Haven and London: Yale University Press; 374 pp., $35.00

◆

"Over the generations," wrote Milton M. Gordon in his 1964 study of the assimilation of white ethnics, "the triumph of acculturation in America has been, if not complete, at least numerically and functionally overwhelming." There was still communitarian or "structural" pluralism in white America, said Gordon, but this was to be understood within the overarching framework of assimilation into Anglo-American behavior patterns, self-image, and civic ideals.

That optimistic vision has been all but extinguished in recent years by open immigration—a policy that was launched just one year after the publication of Gordon's *Assimilation in American Life*—and the fetish of "multiculturalism." The unmeltable pluralism of whites and nonwhites has become our national obsession, and interest in white ethnicity as such has correspondingly declined. Indeed, when in more and more parts of the country white Americans have begun to seem like the remnant of a vanishing civilization, the subject of inter-*white* differences, or white anything, seems almost archaic.

But now Richard Alba, a professor of sociology at the State University of New York at Albany, returns to the neglected subject of assimilation among whites. Looking at such factors as ancestry, residence, education, and income, Alba finds that even the structural pluralism that Milton Gordon observed among Americans of European ancestry is rapidly eroding. Yet even as the objective basis of *ethnicity* has declined, Alba notes that a subjective sense of ethnic *identity* is persisting; at least half of native-born whites still think of themselves in ethnic terms. Alba's main purpose is to determine the "personal meaningfulness or felt intensity" of ethnic identity, based on a study conducted among 524 residents of the Albany region in upstate New York. In this phenomenon of ethnic identity as distinct from traditional ethnicity, he sees the signs of a new ethnic group embracing all Americans of European descent. Less convincingly, he also sees grounds for discarding an essential component of Milton Gordon's theory of assimilation.


Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Alba has some important and startling news to tell about ethnic change. Intermarriage is a key factor: one half of all native-born white couples have no ethnic ancestry in common, while only one out of four couples have identical backgrounds. Interethnic mixture is rapidly increasing over time. Less than one third of whites born before 1920 had mixed ancestry; but 60 percent of those born after 1960, and two thirds of those born after 1970, are mixed. In some groups, the rate of intermarriage is even higher; two thirds of all Italian Americans born since 1940 are of mixed ancestry. The erasure of ethnic boundaries is making even the concept of intermarriage obsolete. In many cases people barely know the ethnic background of their spouse.

Ethnic solidarity, based on the sense of a shared heritage and destiny, is also declining. The dispersal of ethnic neighborhoods and occupational niches has meant the loss of common political interests. "The zone of common experiences that can be presumed for the members of any group has been steadily narrowed. . . . This means that when two persons with similar ethnic ancestries meet for the first time, there is little they can assume is common to them both solely on the

Lawrence Auster is a freelance writer living in New York. He is the author of The Path to National Suicide, *published by the American Immigration Control Foundation.*

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basis of ethnic background." Group identity has been drained of any larger meaning, reduced to a label. Almost the only remaining ethnically homogeneous organizations are churches.

The result of all this is that "ethnicity, once transmitted by a communal web enmeshing families, neighborhoods, and informal networks, is now dependent on the identities of individuals. Ethnic identity has become "Americanized," no longer a given but a free assertion of individuality.

Yet Alba finds that the voluntary ways in which people still define their ethnic identity, such as ethnic cuisine and traditions, the use of words or phrases from an ancestral language, visits to an ancestral homeland, and so on, turn out to be "symbolic assertions of little practical consequence . . . a fragile and thin layer alloyed to a larger body of common American culture." Many respondents who initially claimed that they kept ethnic traditions seemed unsure what those traditions were. Only 25 percent had had six or more "ethnically defining" experiences, while an equal percentage had had none. Only 27 percent had discussed their ethnic background with their children during the past five years.

Not surprisingly, ethnic identity is more important, or "salient," among "new stock" Americans—Irish, Italians, Poles—than "old stock" Americans—the Dutch, English, and Scots whose ancestors arrived in the country before 1800. Among the groups of the old stock, only 10 to 20 percent feel ethnic background is "very important"; among those of the new, 40 percent. The 20 percent of whites who choose no ethnic identity, describing themselves simply as American, are mainly of old stock, as are the one-third of Alba's respondents who were unable to identify the ethnic identity of their spouse. The strong appeal of ethnic identity is seen in the fact that individuals who are mixtures of old and new stock are more likely to identify as Italians or Poles than as English or Scots, "despite the higher percentage attached to early American origins."

In seeking to account for the persisting attractiveness of ethnic identity among whites in the absence of traditional ethnicity, Alba hardly mentions what may be the most obvious explanation—the mounting numbers and power of nonwhite groups with high-profile ethnic identities. According to the "Diversity Project," a study of student attitudes at the multiracial campus of the University of California at Berkeley, white students feel that not having an ethnic identity is a liability in a world where nonwhite students are "discovering and strengthening" their own identities. Whiteness, the students indicated, means "being without identity, without culture, 'without color.'" One student remarked:

> Many whites don't feel like they have an ethnic identity at all and I pretty much feel that way too. It's not something that bothers me tremendously but I think that maybe I could be missing something that other people have, that I am not experiencing.

Such considerations lend force to Alba's most interesting suggestion—that the function of white ethnic identity today is to claim membership in a new ethnic group embracing all white Americans.

> The members of this new group do not define themselves solely in terms of an "American" identity. . . . Rather, they continue to define themselves, to some extent at least, in terms of European points of origin. But, in contrast to the past, the different European ancestries are not seen as the basis of important social divisions; instead, they create a potential for social bonds having an ethnic character, founded on the perception of similar experiences of immigration and social mobility. This new group can be called, for lack of a better term, the "European Americans."

The European Americans also fit the three classic criteria of an ethnic group: they define themselves in terms of common history (*i.e.*, European origin, immigration, assimilation, and upward mobility); membership in the group is a badge of "social honor" by virtue of symbolic participation in that history; and the group is a carrier of economic or political interests.

However, Alba sees the European-American identity less as a carrier of parochial interests than as a model of assimilation for today's Third World immigrants. "The thrust of European-American identity is to defend the individualistic view of the American system," portraying the society as open to those who work hard and pull themselves up. The assimilation of European immigrants then becomes the new national ideal, preserving what is best in America by defining "a prototypical American experience, against which non-European minority groups . . . are pressured to measure themselves."

The fatal flaw in Alba's theory is that it ignores a key component of cultural assimilation—the adoption of the historical heritage of the host people as *one's own*. As Renan said, a nation is defined not by blood ties as such but by a shared historical memory and a common heritage. If the influence of the new stock Americans has resulted in the immigration story supplanting the Founding heritage as the definitive American idea, then to that extent, cultural assimilation has *failed*.

It was once thought that assimilation meant becoming an American, which included identifying with American (and Western) history and its prototypical figures; now Alba tells us that assimilation only means becoming *Homo economicus*. Immigration, along with an attenuated view of assimilation that encourages the maintenance of ancestral identities, thus becomes the central American idea.

And as we all should know by now, it is only one small step from the "Nation of Immigrants" to the "Universal Nation"—a radical redefinition of America that mandates perpetual open borders and cultural suicide. "Diversity," a vacuous concept that clears the way for every sort of ethnic imperialism and separatism, replaces the Founding tradition along with the Anglo-American virtues which that tradition honors. In the final analysis, the secular sanctification of the immigrant story, far from serving the cohesive and normative role that Richard Alba envisions for it, may only be leading the way to the ultimate submergence of both the Anglo-American *and* the European-American cultural identities in this country.

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Peaceable Kingdoms

by Paul Gottfried

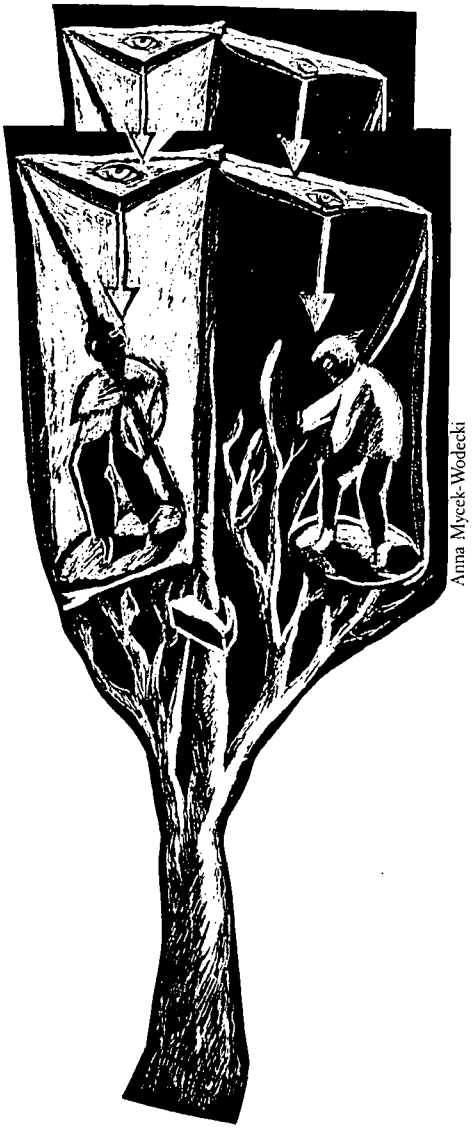
"The consent of all nations is the law of nature."
—Cicero

On the Law of Nations
by Daniel Patrick Moynihan
Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press; 224 pp., $22.50

◆

On the Law of Nations is a powerful brief in favor of what the United States Supreme Court in 1900 declared to be "the customs and usages of the civilized world." (In *Paquete Habana*, the highest court declared international law to be "part of our law" and therefore binding upon the American government and upon American citizens. Article One, Section Eight of the Constitution gives Congress the power to punish "Offenses against the Law of Nations.") By "international law," Moynihan means the evolving customs and written legal obligations defining international relations and preventing those relations from becoming entirely arbitrary. What makes this brief particularly compelling is Moynihan's honesty regarding the obstacles to achieving his goal.

Despite his stated admiration for Woodrow Wilson, for example, Moynihan cites the policies of President Wilson and of his secretary of state, Robert Lansing, in order to underscore the difficulty of applying international law fairly. Though Wilson's appeal to Congress for war against Germany on April 2, 1917, invoked international law, Wilson and Lansing had schemed to bring about American involvement in the conflict. They had filtered public information through government agencies and had drawn the Germans into peace negotiations in December 1916, while urging the British and French to remain intransigent. Moynihan notes that both American geopolitical interests and the cultural biases of the Eastern establishment predestined



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

the United States to incline toward the Allied side. But the struggle in Europe was between constitutional monarchies (England against Germany and Austria-Hungary), not, as it was depicted, between besieged democrats and aggressive militarists. And Wilson's allegations concerning violations by Germany of international law were both hypocritical and hyperbolic, given the insincerity of America's claim to neutrality and the rough moral equivalence that could be demonstrated between the two sides.

Throughout the book Moynihan takes the position "*pacta servanda sunt*," which holds that civilized states, like civil individuals, should keep those obligations they publicly accept. He is therefore troubled that the United States encroached upon the sovereignty of the British Commonwealth, which it claims to recognize, by invading Grenada. He is also disturbed that American Presidents now take military actions against foreign powers without declarations of war and without seriously consulting Congress. Neither international conventions nor constitutional restraints are currently permitted to stand in the way of American foreign policy. Moynihan bristles at a statement by Robert Bork, made on the eve of the Panama invasion, that "by eliminating morality from its calculus, international law actually makes moral action appear immoral." The "moral action" that Bork was justifying without reservation was "restoring democracy and freedom" to people who had lost them. Bork was explaining why the United States was morally obligated to ignore the sovereignty of other states whose behavior it found objectionable.

Much in Moynihan's brief should please authentic conservatives and, conversely, drive neoconservatives up the wall. Despite his past as a Cold War liberal and his occasional Wilsonian aberrations, Moynihan (at least in his latest book) takes views on foreign policy similar to those of Thomas Fleming and Murray Rothbard. My own notions of sovereignty being Hobbesian rather than Jeffersonian, I for one would have no strong objection against a chief executive taking military action without consulting Ted Kennedy and Howard Metzenbaum, providing always that two conditions be obtained: one, that there must be an obvious danger to the safety of the American people; and two, that the use of force must be justifiable in terms of public security, not by pointing to a

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new world order. My only reservation with allowing our current chief executive to exercise sovereign powers is our present difficulty in sorting out two entirely different political aims: the protection of American lives and vital national resources, and the reconstruction of the world. The confusion of the first with the second is the result of an historical process that needs to be examined. Moynihan touches on that process, but never explores it in depth.

What he calls the "law of nations" was in fact an Eurocentric development, with Roman roots. Coming into existence in early modern Europe, this order of things, to which the German jurist Carl Schmitt devoted his last great work, assumed a more or less fixed territorial arrangement among European nation states. The *jus publicum Europaeum* made allowances for war in the case of otherwise unresolvable disputes, but imposed limits on such conflict. War took place between professional armies, but was not supposed to injure civilians. Countries faced the danger of having to cede land but could not be entirely displaced, and disputes were to be treated as strictly political, without incorporating the older ideas of "just wars" and "just causes." Schmitt observes that Europeans arrived at this thoroughly dispassionate view of international relations after a century or more of religious struggles between and within their countries. Instead of continuing to slaughter each other *ad majoram gloriam Dei*, European leaders and jurists cast about for a new and less violent kind of international relations. It was one that appealed to Thomas Hobbes, Francois Vatte, and David Hume but could not hold sway in the world according to Robespierre, Lenin, or Bork. In any case, the *jus publicum Europaeum* became increasingly irrelevant the farther one moved from European culture or from the prerevolutionary Europe that produced it. Today, international law has become subject to a wide range of ideological variables, including the right of insurgents, also recognized in the U.N. Charter, to overthrow oppressive regimes.

Like Moynihan, I would like the world to return to a "law of nations," but unlike him I do not believe that the means to this end is "global democracy." Repeating Woodrow Wilson's tendentious but meaningless dictum, that democracies do not make war on each other, Moynihan expresses the pious wish that Wilson was correct in his assertion. Wilson intended, as his neoconservative disciples have, that the United States foster good relations with and among nations having compatible institutions and values. Hapless countries with opposing values and institutions (*e.g.*, Imperial Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Saudi Arabia), have been made by Wilsonian critics to appear criminally undemocratic as well. Their villainy has been exaggerated, in some cases, in order to portray their culturally alien societies as politically wicked.

There is no historical reason to assume that ancient or modern democracies have been more peace-loving than other regimes. Even before the French Revolution combined democratic missionizing with violence and genocide, David Hume noted the tendency of ancient democracies and republics to be relentlessly imperialistic. And in modern imperialism a similar tendency has been discernible. It was among Radical Republicans in France, Fabian socialists in England, and forward-thinking Americans at the turn of the century that imperialism found some of its readiest recruits. In modern America it is, predictably, the democratic globalists, not the Taft Republicans, who have been beating the drums for a *pax Americana*. Moynihan views modern India as "democratic" because of its electoral process and at least limited civil liberties. In view of that country's conquest of Goa, its meddling in ethnic wars in Sri Lanka, and its past eagerness to become embroiled with Pakistan, I find it an exaggeration to describe democratic India as "peaceable." Certainly it has not been more peaceable than its neighbor Pakistan, governed by a sequence of military regimes.

Having entered these qualified objections, I should add that Bork's previously quoted remarks, which resemble enormities ascribed to Jeane Kirkpatrick, are even more alarming than Moynihan suggests. They amount to an open invitation to apply armed force against any state that is not in step with currently accepted definitions of "democracy" and "freedom." In fact, there is no reason to assume that our definitions of these political buzzwords will remain constant, and it is entirely conceivable that we may eventually overthrow governments that fail to replicate our civil rights revolution and our feminist reforms. We have already taken belligerent action against a friendly state in southern Africa. And prominent liberal journalists, during the heady month of August 1990, were advocating that America impose female emancipation on Islamic societies. Modern democracy may indeed turn out to be the kind of rogue elephant that we have long considered communism to be.

If so, we can forget about Moynihan's, or anyone else's, restraining law of nations. ◈

LIBERAL ARTS

KEEPING THE FAITH

In an early draft of *The Power of Ethical Management*, the Reverend Norman Vincent Peale and Kenneth Blanchard reportedly listed prayer as the last of five ethical principles, right after purpose, pride, patience, and persistence. Their editors, however, became concerned. The Scripps Howard News Service quoted Blanchard as saying, "It seemed that a few people we talked to thought that using a big religious word like that would put some people off. . . . So we went with 'perspective,'" said Blanchard. "People liked that better."

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The End of History

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

The Technological Bluff
by Jacques Ellul
Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans; 418 pp., $24.95

◆

It seems to me that the staff and all the contributing editors to *Chronicles*, working together for a year in paradisiacal California on a lavish grant from the MacArthur Foundation, could not possibly produce as pessimistic a work as *The Technological Bluff* by the French cultural critic and author of more than forty books, Jacques Ellul. For that reason, among many others, I commend it to the attention of our readers. (One of the other reasons is a delicious "Excursion on [Julian] Simon, *The Ultimate Resource*," beginning on page 20 and running through page 23: "I have seldom seen a book which is so absurd in the realm of economics . . . and technology. . . . We have here an absolute form of the technological bluff. . . . this so-called scientific thinking . . . . these pseudoscientific absurdities. . . . a good illustration of the technolatry that is supposed to be scientific and to be based on facts.")

Jacques Ellul is professor emeritus of law and of the sociology and history of institutions at the University of Bordeaux, his native city. The examples he uses to concretize his arguments are thus drawn from contemporary French society, yet those arguments themselves raise American echoes from as far back as Henry Adams ("The Virgin and the Dynamo"), the Agrarians of the 1930's (*I'll Take My Stand*), and the writings of Lewis Mumford, whose work Ellul cites. Among Ellul's earlier books is one called *The Technocratic Society*, in which he first put forward (in 1954) many of the ideas found in *The Technological Bluff*—where, however, he has found it necessary to radicalize many of them. If misery truly loves company, American readers should be made to feel very comfortable by Ellul's portrait of what was formerly the nation of the Capets and the Bourbons, of Racine and Molière, of Toulouse-Lautrec and French postcards. We are all of us in the West in this catastrophe together, and it is far, far later than most of us, on both sides of the Atlantic, suspect or even fear. Throughout his book, Ellul frequently anticipates that what he is about to write will be found scandalous, but he is never afraid of being dismissed as a nattering nabob of negativism, perhaps because his forty books are already much better remembered (though they are hardly ever heeded) than either the speeches of Spiro Agnew, or Spiro Agnew himself. "In fact," he remarks a quarter of the way into *The Technological Bluff*, "I think that the game is lost. With the help of computer power, the technical system has definitively escaped from control by the human will."

Ellul distinguishes between "the technical system" and "the technical society," which retains nontechnical elements and traditional areas unaffected by the system itself. However, he believes that "the technological bluff" assures that these redoubts cannot much longer remain unaffected. Here, as in earlier works, Ellul distinguishes also between "technique"—what in common parlance is called "technology"—and technology as it is properly understood, that is to say as "discourse on technique." It is childish, Ellul insists, to be against technique, as it is childish and absurd to be opposed to "an avalanche or to cancer"; it is infantile—and fatal—both to engage in and to succumb to "the technological bluff," which he defines as "the gigantic bluff in which discourse on techniques envelopes us, making us believe anything and, far worse, changing our whole attitude to techniques: the bluff of politicians, the bluff of the media, the bluff of technicians when they talk about techniques instead of working at them, the bluff of publicity, the bluff of economic models." The bluff, he says,

> consists of rearranging everything in terms of technical progress, which with prodigious diversification offers us in every direction such varied possibilities that we can imagine nothing else. . . . There is bluff here because the effective possibilities are multiplied a hundredfold . . . and the negative aspects are radically concealed. But the bluff is not without great effect. Thus it transforms a technique of *implicit and unavowed* last resort into a technique of *explicit and avowed* last resort. It also causes us to live in a world of diversion and illusion which goes far beyond that of ten years ago. It finally sucks us into this world by banishing all our ancient reservations and fears.

A century ago, Ellul argues, technique was in service to economies, which directed them toward the production of industrial goods. Today, technique has taken over direction of the industrial economy in order to produce gadgets—defined by Ellul as products whose utility is greatly counterbalanced by the ingenuity of their designers—that are themselves the direct results of technique, and the profits of which are reinvested in the production of still more technicized gadgets. Whatever technique can do, it must be developed to do, since to refrain would be to deny science or to "stop progress"—which Ellul understands as "the course of technique." These gadgets, however, do not represent real wealth, nor, increasingly, does the capital invested in them represent real money, that is to say, money based upon a standard of real value: by geometric progression, economics and the societies that support them become increasingly abstract,

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as the historian John Lukacs has written, or "absurd," to use Jacques Ellul's term. Science being powerless without money, and the state being powerless without technique, "The state finally finds its legitimacy in science and technique. . . . The legitimacy of power is no longer religious or democratic. Power affirms itself scientifically. Science validates it because it can do nothing without power. For the public, science is one great goddess which it cannot question and which validates those who serve it. Science and technique thus act upon politics and politics functions as positive feedback."

Thus, power affirms itself politically as well, and in terms as absolute as it can manage to acquire; it manages very well, since the vast majority of citizens (like the vast majority of politicians) do not comprehend technique, which they must accept first on its works and finally on faith alone. For the state to function at maximum efficiency, it needs to impose standardization upon society, and to encourage a larger ignorance and a lesser independence of mind. In order to do this, it engages in a generalized act of technological bluffing, by informing society that the only solution to mankind's problem, as well as the only hope for a humanized future in which, for the first time in history, human beings will be fully human, is technique; and by reminding it that in any event, a future wholly created by technique is inevitable and can only be prepared for by recreating traditional culture as the culture of technique (which, as Ellul proves, is a contradiction in terms).

Meanwhile, the technically justified state encourages the transformation of the natural environment into an artificial one—it, far from being "dedivinized," represents the transferal of the sacred from objects in nature to those of technique—and increases exponentially the risk of natural catastrophe. Theoretically, Ellul believes, the computer might have proved the device by which we could make sense of and control these absurdities; but, with its incorporation into the technical system, it can only serve that system, and it is now too late to reestablish the terms by which it exists among us. Today, consequently, the computer is for the most part a gadget that creates more problems than it solves, that has succeeded in making our economies and our information and defense networks much more fragile and capable of disruption, and that has provided us with far more "data" than we can possibly make sense of—and therefore use. As the idiocies and monstrosities of genetic research prove, our capacities have outstripped our judgment; while a new generation of "fascinated people" has arisen that is devoid of any sense of reality. ("Fascination means exclusive fixation on an object, passionate interest, the impossibility of turning away, a hypnotic obedience, a total lack of awareness, and finally exteriorization of self.")

Welcome then to The New World Order—which Jacques Ellul calls The Great Design. (Why couldn't George Bush's speechwriting team have been as poetic?) Is Ellul too pessimistic in all of this? I don't believe that he is—descriptively at least, though it may be that the God Who has so far seen fit to provide for fools and the United States of America will take pity on the rest of the West whom Uncle Sam has so effectively Americanized. Meanwhile, Ellul, having invited us to examine technological bluff as a kind of soteriology, offers a possible eschatology as well. "We have reached," he suggests,

> the extreme limit of progress (that of modernity or ultratechnical nature) when the object plays a role by its mere absence, being the fictitious stake of a mimesis (Girard) of appropriation. . . . [I]t is "the presence of the absence" of a purpose in all the [contemporary] conflicts that renders them the more violent. Terrorism is typical.

Is it possible that the "end of history" will be no more than the paralysis of human thought, motivation, and activity by what Jacques Ellul describes as "the internal contradictions of the technical system and society"?

Chilton Williamson, Jr.
is senior editor for books
at Chronicles.

BRIEF MENTIONS

TWENTY-FOUR BAGATELLES IN AN ANTIQUE MODE
by Harold McCurdy
Omaha, Cummington Press; unpaginated, $25.00

In recent years, it has been impossible to ignore the careful and well-crafted work of such comparatively obscure writers as Harold McCurdy. His recent *Twenty-Four Bagatelles in an Antique Mode*, a handsome little volume produced by master-printer Harry Duncan's Cummington Press, is an excellent occasion for readers of poetry to discover Mr. McCurdy's work. His is the art that conceals art. There are no grand gestures, no pyrotechnics to titillate or disappoint, only the elegant and lucid verse of a poet who has learned his trade. His careful diction and simplicity will remind some readers of Lionel Johnson. He has some of Johnson's sweetness too with little of the overripe sentimentality that marred so much of the best 90's verse. His best effects are achieved by understatement (is there a more self-deprecating title than "Bagatelles"?):

> Others have seen Visions: I have seen
> The green of bean vines and the sea's green.

and by putting together ordinary things that seem to take on added significance only by the juxtaposition. Beans and the sea, for example, or this sequence glimpsed in Tunisia:

> Darkwinged swallows twittered by
> The mountain lifted to the sky
> Great white stones like unthawed snow
> Spelling out a giant NO!
> A Greek OXI, fierce and clear
> For some Hitler bombardier.

Readers of *Chronicles* will be acquainted with Mr. McCurdy's work from his appearances in our pages, and this fine volume is an excellent opportunity for getting to know it better.

—*Thomas Fleming*

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Wills' Way

by James B. Graves

Under God: Religion and American Politics
by Garry Wills
New York City: Simon and Schuster; 445 pp., $24.95

◆

Garry Wills is, of course, the talented apostate conservative whose interpretative political reporting avoids the usual journalistic clichés. No one will disagree that Wills penetrates events more deeply than do, say, the editorial writers for the *New York Times*, any more than he will deny that Wills' insight and wit are broadly in service to the social agenda promoted by the *Times*.

A charitable (if somewhat patronizing) impression shared by certain of his fellow Catholic intellectuals who knew him *when* is that Garry Wills is rather a bad boy who writes more to impress than to clarify. The consensus seems to be: Of course Garry is puckishly clever, sometimes even outrageous. But his heart is finally in the right place, you know. My own impression is that *heart* is what Garry Wills' latest book conspicuously lacks, as do the books of every other solipsist. And this, I believe, is why the man's well-exercised ingenuity takes printed shape largely as *vox et praeterea nihil*. That is, an illusion of substance and sense, though of a kind with capacity for mischief, like the voice of Tolkien's Saruman. About which more will follow.

Under God is a digressive jumble that commences with a spanking delivered to his materialist friends in the news media, in academe, and especially in politics, with specific reference to the 1988 presidential campaign. What Wills accurately points out to these types is that their purblindness to spiritual things is so far out of the American mainstream as to be politically costly to them. As Wills demonstrates of the election that became the Democrats' most recent national disaster, Michael Dukakis really had no chance to ride to the White House on the back of those bony managerial skills he advertised.

"The Duke's" absorption in pragmatism, for instance, precluded his foreseeing—and, in the aftermath, his understanding—the widespread odium provoked by his confession that he was a "card carrying member" of the American Civil Liberties Union. To Michael Dukakis, the ACLU is merely a civic group busy securing the good things its name suggests. But to Americans at large this outfit is the spearhead of a militantly anti-religious (more nearly, a militantly anti-Christian) thrust. And that this view is not entirely without reason, Wills acknowledges by pointing out how the ACLU "as a whole has tried to prevent religious groups from meeting in schools under the provisions of the equal-access bill passed by Congress in 1985, which allows extracurricular clubs, even those that study the Bible, to use the same facilities that bird-watchers and ham-radio operators do." Carping over such minutiae is bad politics, Wills hints. (By the way, someone should tell Garry Wills about that 8-1 vote, appropriately announced last July Fourth, by which the Supreme Court *upheld* the Equal Access Act.)

Under God isn't mainly about the ACLU, as I've seemed above to indicate it is. What this book does is take the big political players in the 1988 race, those in the primaries as well as the two finalists, and analyze their religious backgrounds (or lack thereof) as those backgrounds showed up in behavior on the hustings. The author likewise comments on public reaction to that behavior.

The book reaches two main conclusions. Wills' intended *coup de grace* at the end of the book draws on passages from Jefferson and Madison, picked to show that the Framers originally intended to build some more or less solid barrier between church and state. To be sure, Wills includes qualifiers here. But readers will notice he shows no embarrassment in slighting the contrary evidence, both massive and widely known. Garry Wills' other conclusion is the hortatory one I've already noted. The thrust is: My secularist friends, it's tactically unsound to surrender the religious high-ground to the right wing. Religion can be co-opted as a real force for Progress, provided you're only willing to hold your nose and pretend to like it. Look at the abolitionists and the women's rights movement. Look at religious opposition to the Vietnam War and nuclear weapons. Look at church agitation for social justice. Why, a dab or two of the not-so-Old Time religion can butter your political bread quite nicely.

In *Under God* Garry Wills twice refers to Origen, the learned Christian writer and heretic of the third century, and it occurs to me that Garry Wills resembles Origen in some conspicuous ways. Like Origen, Garry Wills is a skilled (indeed, a determined) dialectician with opinions on everything. With many of these he grows so smitten as repeatedly to get carried off on wings of shiny theory and novelty. Because, again like Origen, Wills can't (at least, he too often *doesn't*) balance the dialectical mode with concern for givens, he imagines, insolently, that mere reason and some broad reading qualify him, as noted above, even to theologize, something he undertakes with apparent eagerness.

Don't misunderstand me. I leave it to Rome and the Romans to determine who their Catholic heretics are. But in regard to the ongoing *Kulturkampf* in America, which Garry Wills blames the so-called Religious Right for provoking against the pro-abortion crowd, the pornography lobby, and the rest of the organized anti-family movement, on whose side he makes war with crafty words, the man is a heresiarch; as this tissue of half-truths and outright errors he wove as *Under God* makes so clear.

James B. Graves is a former classics professor who lives in Ipswich, Massachusetts.

M·O·V·I·N·G·?

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Bring Me the Head of John D.

by Philip N. Marcus

The Politics of Knowledge: The Carnegie Corporation, Philanthropy, and Public Policy
by Ellen Condliffe Lagemann
Middletown: Wesleyan University Press; 347 pp., $35.00

Charity Begins at Home: Generosity and Self-Interest Among the Philanthropic Elite
by Teresa Odendahl
New York: Basic Books; 299 pp., $22.95

◆

"Studying" philanthropy is a new academic enterprise, and one riven by various interests. Though a growing camp of scholars is following grant money, their studies, even when critical, generally confirm the conventional wisdom of foundation leaders. As a permanent supplicant, the academy approaches organized philanthropy with either a tugged forelock or an upraised fist.

Ellen Condliffe Lagemann, a professor of education at Teacher's College, Columbia, is skeptical yet yielding to the reasons for the politics of philanthropy. Her *Politics of Knowledge* is a royal history of the Carnegie Corporation, just as the professional heirs to Andrew's great dream of the "gospel of wealth" would have it. Teresa Odendahl, on the other hand, demands new layers of political control over private philanthropy. Here is the controversial reappearance of the orthodox case against private wealth.

Though Lagemann repeatedly apologizes for writing "elite" history, the Carnegie Corporation has shaped the nation by pioneering efforts to elevate popular culture. One of the oldest foundations in America, and until World War II the largest, its current assets of about $800 million make it the nation's eleventh largest. Lagemann's detailed analysis is done with Teutonic care and focuses on Carnegie's various legacies, from the public libraries and the establishment of adult and art education to public television. Since the 1960's, the corporation has used "councils" explicitly to try to change public policy. Lagemann concludes that with these Carnegie has been chasing fifteen minutes of fame, trumpeting yesterday's headline to get on tomorrow's news, and in so doing "perhaps" limiting its long-term influence.

Education used to be synonymous with Carnegie, and "Let There Be Light" was graven over the entrance to all Carnegie libraries. But later Carnegie leaders withdrew support from James B. Conant's vapid campaign for public schools. They chose to follow instead Christopher Jenck's advice that an "incomes policy" would have to be used to produce social equality. So Carnegie, late in institutional middle-age, rediscovered poverty.

Lagemann notes that the report of another council, *All Our Children* (1977), marked Carnegie's turn from education to out-and-out politics, a turn that "could be interpreted as being at odds with the corporation's liberal charter and tradition." The shift, she argues, "represented movement by the Corporation to a broader conception of liberal reform than it had tended to accept earlier." Carnegie justified its first grant to the Children's Defense Fund as advancing "the right of every child to an education." With millions of dollars more to follow, it is wondrous that the author, or the corporation, remains silent about the principal work of its current president, Marian Wright Edelman: her annual appeals for reduced defense spending and expanded political control over the last vestiges of personal life in America.

Lagemann speculates on what Carnegie might have, but did not, fund. Instead of creating think tanks, what if Jane Addams's Hull House had been chosen? Instead of siding in legal studies with the Bar Association and its use of case law, what if it had supported legal positivism? Her answer, as you may have anticipated, is that generations of "sexism, racism, class bias, and WASP provincialism" could have been avoided. Carnegie has simply not gone far enough, but what makes Lagemann's an acceptable version of foundation historiography is her documentation of progressive "growth."

Delicate language and abstractions disappear in Odendahl's book. Instead of rewriting the past, she shows concern for the future. The map for the next Jacksonian regime (Jesse's) and the socialization of charity could be this book. For that reason, Odendahl has become the darling ex-philanthropist of the left. She is a scholar who violates the code of foundation study, which forbids both criticism and blunt —especially political—language, and she deserves credit for daring to raise unmentionable topics.

We learn sometimes more and sometimes less about the charitable rich; Odendahl is better on the newer variants of philanthropy. "Rich kids" practice "alternative philanthropy," an annual $5 million sandbox spoiled, as in the Chinese Cultural Revolution, by "red/expert" fights between donors and recipients over control of the money. She describes all women philanthropists as feminists ("only three actually used the word") determined to transform charity's "exchange economy"—"Do real men give away someone else's money?"

We learn something of religion's exclusion from secularized charities. Who today can reply as John D. Rockefeller did that "God gave me the money"? In 140 interviews, only Southern Protestants and Jews ground the genesis of their charitable impulses in religion. (But while remarking upon the absence of Catholic foundations, Odendahl is silent about the Church as a charity.)

We do not learn that the rich are evil, despite her best efforts to teach that lesson. The moneyed people she interviews are nothing if not modest and self-effacing. She went looking for Trump and found Everyman with a trust. Only by a forced interpretation of these millionaires' words can Odendahl try to make us believe that the rich frolic while the masses despair, government shrinks, elites flourish, and what she calls the "community community" remains poor and outside. Still, to her, charity is "false consciousness" beguiling the public into sustaining class-bound cultural forms. She reports that among the inheritors of money and influence can be found—*self-interest*!

The ghost of John D. Rockefeller

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haunts Odendahl's book. She has written a gloss on H.D. Lloyd's *Wealth Against Commonwealth*: her *Charity Begins at Home* is feminist deconstruction as muckraking. The public's ripoff by "tax subsidies" are the rebates of today. The private charters she deplores are secure, except for criminal and other forms of "self-dealing." And she calls for an end to "dynastic" monies, a view common during the 1930's but dropped down the memory hole decades ago.

By having broken company with liberal defenders of foundations, Odendahl exposes an old and deep political fault line between entrenched foundation executives and foundation radicals like herself, who dismiss all private charity-givers as "lackeys" and "functionaries" running an oligarchy. Odendahl prefers the *demos* of advanced affirmative action at the state's direction. Private charity is merely capitalism's fig leaf, unless it is dedicated to welfare spending, and directed by the underclass.

Private foundations do have a history, the first part of which ended in 1969 when Congress emasculated them with tax code restrictions. Before that, and starting in the Progressive era, foundations operating under the mantle of the "knowledgeable" servants of society raised up what we now know as "government." Nowadays, displaced in many of their functions by the state, and losing sovereignty to public charities, foundations are charity's House of Lords—the tamed liberal establishment.

Philip N. Marcus is a foundation consultant.

BRIEF MENTIONS

WHEN THE MUSIC'S OVER: THE STORY OF POLITICAL POP
by Robin Denselow
London and Boston: Faber and Faber; 292 pp., $19.95

When rock and roll arrived on the music scene in the mid 1950's, many parents in the Midwest and South regarded it as a Communist plot to promote sexual promiscuity, race-mixing, and political rebellion. Most of the original rockers were unconventional, to say the least, and their collision with Tinpan Alley could have been billed as the Wild Bunch crashes high society. Still, Elvis and Jerry Lee, and Carl, and Johnny, and Roy were ordinary Southern Democrats in most of their social and political attitudes, and, as Robin Denselow reveals, even Neil Young supported Ronald Reagan. Rock music in its more serious manifestations turned leftward, because American culture is overwhelmingly leftist. It is a contagion that only the very naive (like Elvis) or the very acute can escape, and acute brains do not devote their talents and energies to attracting a following among screaming teenagers.

All of this is lost on Mr. Denselow, a *Guardian* writer who knows little about American music and still less about our politics. He agrees, in substance, with the Baptist preachers who arranged the record burnings of the 50's and finds confirmation in the careers of Pete Seeger, John Lennon, Phil Ochs, Bob Marley, and Gil Scott-Heron. With the exception of John Lennon, none of these figures belongs in a history of rock or even pop music. Sure, there have been many performers who, for one reason or another, have embraced virtually every leftist cause that has come around, but where in this silly book are the white supremacist bands, for example, or the populist C&W artists?

Denselow has done some homework, however, and his discussion of the San Francisco music-politics-drug scene is fascinating, even though he never does get to the point. He can't understand, for example, why "Country Joe" McDonald (named, by the way, for Joe Stalin) thought Phil Ochs' political songs were silly. Denselow finds them naive, but cannot help taking all that blather about revolution seriously. So did Ochs, who killed himself when he ran out of causes.

Like the American pop culture critics at *Rolling Stone*, Denselow is ignorant, bigoted, and unimaginative. But the same is true of television critics who write for major newspapers. The reason is simple: the only people capable of writing intelligently about these subjects won't waste their time, and this leaves the field open for, well, Robin Denselow.

—Thomas Fleming

The Pathetic Individual

by James W. Tuttleton

Theodore Dreiser: An American Journey 1908-1945
by Richard R. Lingeman
New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons
544 pp., $39.95

◆

Perfection of the life or perfection of the art? The imperatives of art being what they are, Yeats thought that the writer could not have both. With the completion of Richard R. Lingeman's two-volume biography of Theodore Dreiser, it seems evident that Dreiser was fated to attain neither.

Born in 1871 in Indiana, Dreiser managed at best a patchwork education, supported himself by journalism, and tried his hand at fiction. His apprentice work was undistinguished, but the success of *Sister Carrie* (1900), a work of naturalistic determinism, made Dreiser a new force to reckon with in the literary world. His early life to 1907 was covered in the first volume of this biography—*Theodore Dreiser: At the Gates of the City, 1871-1907* (1986). In the present volume Lingeman concludes his project with a massively detailed account of Dreiser's mature years.

In 1908, when Volume II commences, Dreiser was 37, married to Sara White and a respected editor of the *Delineator*, a ladies' magazine in New York. The appointment was short-lived, however, as he was fired over a scandalous love affair with Thelma Cudlipp, a girl much younger than himself. Purchasing a defunct magazine (the *Bohemian*), Dreiser tried to support himself in publishing, failed, and resumed freelance journalism and fiction. These are the years of his major novels: *Jennie Gerhardt* (1911), *The Financier* (1912), *The Titan* (1914), *The "Genius"* (1915), *An American Tragedy* (1925), *The Bulwark* (1946), and *The Stoic* (1947). In addition, he produced a great deal of hack work: plays, verse, travel, short stories, and autobiography. He died in 1945.

The image of Dreiser that emerges from these pages is not notably different from the Dreiser sketched in the

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older biographies. Nor, as a whole, does this work even begin to approach the *art* of biography. But it must be said that Lingeman is much more detailed than other biographers, especially when dealing with Dreiser's romantic involvements, his relations with his publishers, and his political ruminations.

As to his romantic escapades, the facts are quite simple: Dreiser was sex-obsessed and a compulsive philanderer. As one reads this volume, Dreiser's affairs seem tawdrier and tawdrier, more and more meaningless. Not only Thelma Cudlipp but also Elaine Hyman, Estelle Bloom Kubitz, Louisa Campbell, Lillian Rosenthal, Anna Tatum, Yvette Szekely, Sally Kusell, a Mrs. Howey, a Maude Guitteau, a Magdalen Davis, a Marguerite Tjader Harris, an Elizabeth Coakley—the list of typists, would-be writers, variety showgirls, and literary groupies whom Dreiser seduced (or was willingly seduced by) appears endless. Some of his *inamoratas* Dreiser identified in his notebooks only by their initials; some in the biography have disguised names. One of them Lingeman can only identify as "The Dark Lady." Few of them meant much more to Dreiser than a quick tumble. Many of the affairs were simultaneous, Dreiser turning two or three tricks a day. Dreiser's spasmodic record obliges Lingeman at one point to add a footnote: "Let it be stated for the record that not all of the women who were friendly with or worked for Dreiser were amorously involved with him."

Nietzsche taught him to believe that the superman could attain a transcendence over conventional morality, a notion evident both in his Cowperwood Trilogy (about the business tycoon Charles T. Yerkes) and in his lubricious sex life. His principal champion, H.L. Mencken, complained that Dreiser thought himself to be the "first cock in Greenwich Village" and did "little writing but devotes himself largely to the stud." On Dreiser's compulsive philandering, mendacity, and betrayal of women, Lingeman offers no clear psychological understanding. And to submit Dreiser to moral judgment seems never to occur to him.

What is evident is that Dreiser had a bottomless sense of self-loathing and insecurity that made it necessary for him to present himself as helplessly in need and to prove his worth by sexual conquest and frantic money-making. Helen Patges Richardson apparently understood this need, for she lived with Dreiser, off and on, for more than a quarter of a century despite what he dignified with the pseudo-scientific term "varietism" in his "affectional relations."

With respect to his publishers, Dreiser's behavior was likewise tawdry. He continually fought with them, complained that they did not promote his books, suspected them of cheating him (especially if they were "clever Jews"), and jumped ship if he smelled a better offer. Much of his writing was so clumsy, or tedious, or offensive to conventional morality that he saw himself as the victim of American puritanism—and indeed *The "Genius"* was so lewd for its time that its publication was delayed by the Society for the Suppression of Vice. Dreiser complained of the "fierce opposition or chilling indifference" that greeted "all those who attempted anything even partially serious in America": "One dared not talk out loud, one dared not report life as it was, as one lived it."

Yet he was not above censoring others. As editor of the *Delineator*, Lingeman writes, Dreiser told H.G. Wells to "tone down a novel submitted to the Del for serialization. While Wells's theme 'might delight the highly intellectual woman,' he said, 'it would possibly offend the rank and file.' He asked Wells 'to modify or eliminate in the remainder of the book the keen thrusts against morality and society.'" About this inconsistency Lingeman comes to no judgment.

Dreiser's lucubrations on politics—a substantial part of this volume—hardly redeem him from the aversion readers will invariably feel for his attitudes. His distaste for the English made him seem pro-German during World War I, and outbursts of anti-Semitism in the 1930's seemed to give aid and comfort to the Nazis. Lingeman remarks that Dreiser regarded the Führer as "a kind of Autobahn populist who stood up to big business and finance." But during this period Dreiser was in fact constantly drifting toward the left. He had been invited to the Soviet Union in 1927, the year he earned the equivalent of a half million dollars, and he returned to announce in *Dreiser Looks at Russia* (1928) that communism had "taken the heartache and the material tragedy from millions and millions of lives" and that "there is much less liberty in America" than under Stalin's regime. Democracy, he announced in 1930, was a "farce."

During the Depression his attacks on American democracy made the Communist Party yearn to recruit him, but he was turned down by Earl Browder as too individualistic, a "loose cannon." Yet Dreiser repeatedly gave his name for use by the International Labor Defense, a Party front, and "when the *Daily Worker* required a contribution for the May Day issue on the press and political prisoners, he told them to write it themselves—'to assure you have just the statement you want'—and he would edit and sign it. 'Make it strong,' he told the editor." At the Party's bidding he produced "investigative labor reporting" in Pittsburgh and elsewhere and naturally became the darling of *Izvestia* for "attacking capitalism and America's pseudo-democracy." After Browder was ousted, Dreiser was indeed recruited, leading Lingeman to utter these stupefying words: "Finally it should be said that Dreiser didn't join the Party in more than a formal sense." In fact, Dreiser is yet another instance of the compassionate American writer without any political sense, seduced by the Party *apparat*.

As a man, then, Dreiser in Lingeman's portrait offers little to admire, despite his biographer's unaccountably sympathetic and nonjudgmental treatment. It is, however, possible to admire some of the novels—particularly *Carrie*, *The Financier*, and *An American Tragedy*. These survive—despite their grotesque stylistic flaws, despite the pseudoscientific descriptions of human behavior and the amoralism they convey—because Dreiser was effective at communicating his essential moving theme: the pathetic individual caught in the tangled snare of his own dreams and appetites, the tragedy of desire, the immense pity of the world.

James W. Tuttleton is a professor of English at New York University.

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Wild Thing

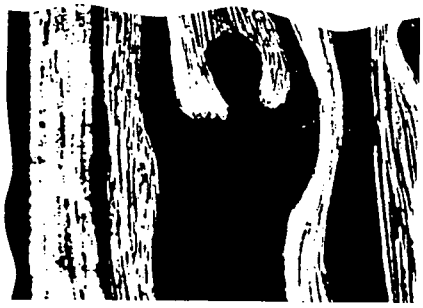
by Gregory McNamee

Iron John
by Robert Bly
Reading, Massachusetts: Addison Wesley;
268 pp., $18.95

◆

A new kind of animal stalks the land these days. If you listen closely, you can hear its strange call: chest-thumping roars alternating with keening wails and abundant sniffles. And if you look carefully, you'll doubtless soon spot one, for they clone faster than jackrabbits. This new critter is now all around us, and the poet Robert Bly has provided a field manual to aid in its identification.

The animal in question is the New American Male (1990's), a dusted-off Gary Cooperesque stalwart (1950's) who's not afraid to cry in public (1970's), a thirtysomething hybrid (1980's) who combines the sensibilities of Alan Alda, John Wayne, and Pee-Wee Herman. He travels in packs. He can often be found in woodland retreats, pounding on tom-toms (1960's) and weeping over his failure to connect with his taciturn father. Our shell-shocked Boy Scout likes to call himself a "wild man," to doff his cordovan wingtips and grey suit of a weekend and roam the dark forests, barefoot, T-shirted.



Robert Bly, a poet and translator of great distinction, has at the age of 65 discovered that he, too, is a wild man. In *Iron John*—its title is taken from a European rite-of-passage folktale that can be found in the pages of the Brothers Grimm and, in far too many permutations, in the book under review—Bly laments the rise of the modern pasty, malleable, "soft man," pounded into shape by the commissars of modern feminism, still inclined to use phrases like "let me share your space" and "I can relate to that." These men, Bly observes,

> are not happy. You quickly notice the lack of energy in them. They are life-preserving but not exactly life-giving. Ironically, you often see these men with strong women who positively radiate energy.

No more namby-pambyism, Bly urges; no more unseemly displays of deference and accommodation to these iron maidens. In his *cri de coeur*, he instead demands that all real men find their "interior warriors" and make themselves fit to take up long-rusty Excaliburs and sally forth into battle.

Inside every man, it seems, there's a King Arthur screaming to get out. Bly aims to spring him through a series of pop-myth recipes for success, complete with archetypal kings and queens, dragons, naiads and dryads, caverns, and sweat lodges. (To read Bly's pages, you'd think Joseph Campbell had returned from the dead for one last fling with the gods.) But, Bly urges, let us not allow our Arthur to degenerate into some modern Conan. We'll do the ordering at dinner, thank you, but on occasion we'll also let our dates select the topic of conversation.

The befuddled are everywhere legion, evidenced by the overflowing shelves devoted to self-help panaceas and New Age mysticism, to cures for every psychic ailment real and imagined, to every social risk. *Iron John* is meant for these survivors of the I'm-okay-you're-okay generation, but it is nowhere near as obnoxious as the run of the literature, and Robert Bly does have his points. Few thoughtful people, after all, would argue that these are happy days, and there are far too many men—and women—out in the heartless world who lack any emotional anchorage whatever; we would surely all do well to learn how to grapple with our emotions more effectively. If becoming "wild" and taking up the sword of the *samurai* within us yields a bit more joy in men's lives, if it contributes to some truce in the war between the sexes, then, as silly as *Iron John* seems, Robert Bly's earnest essay will have done its job.

But I suspect that it will not, and that the New American Male will soon be driven into extinction, to be stored in history's attic next to platform shoes and mood rings. The interested reader would do better to skip *Iron John* and instead invest in a copy of Muddy Waters' blues stomper "Mannish Boy," a T-shirt, and a six-pack. Suitably armed, he can then head to the woods to commune with his inner nature—if, that is, he can find a moment's solace among the hordes of this brooding new beast.

Gregory McNamee is a freelance writer and author living in Tucson, Arizona.

Mysterious Island

by Russell Kirk

Eighty Acres: Elegy for a Family Farm
by Ronald Jager
Foreword by Donald Hall
Boston: Beacon Press;
257 pp., $15.00

◆

Missaukee County, in the heart of the lower peninsula of Michigan, is perfectly flat and perfectly rural, its farms possessed by Dutch Calvinists. When first I, aged 17, traveled across the county, every farmhouse and every barn was ornamented by conspicuous lightning rods, the rustics having been duped by some ingenious salesman. When I inquired after the county courthouse (seeking for a county roadmap), everybody directed me to "the country barns." "Beast is more than man in Meath," the Irish say. So it is, or was, in Missaukee County.

Dr. Ronald Jager, sometime professor of philosophy at Yale, was reared on the eighty acres of a subsistence farm in that simple and honest county; he was sent to study at Calvin College, and that made all the difference; he and his brothers, once grown, never followed the plow. But he is blessed with total recall of his boyhood. His little book, at once realistic, amusing, and pathetic, adds mightily to the corpus of literature of what we may call the Northern Agrarian School. In several ways it parallels Curtis Stadtfeld's *From the Land and Back* (Scribner's, 1972), of which the setting is Michigan's Me-

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costa County, somewhat south of Missaukee, and less fertile: the county of Stadtfeld himself and of this reviewer.

Although in these United States nobody calls himself a peasant, actually the Jagers and their neighbors were a peasantry, living very close indeed to the soil, wasting nothing, close-knit in family, hardworking, pious. The narrowness of their life only half a century ago—indeed, right up through the Second World War—will seem almost medieval to some readers; and that life's simplicity and lack of conveniences will startle people who always have taken for granted running cold and hot water, indoor plumbing, electric lighting, central heating, and all manner of comforts. Such readers will think the Jager family very poor; but the Jagers never thought themselves so, any more than did this reviewer when he spent his summers at his archaic ancestral house in Mecosta County. It did not seem at all dismal to pump one's drinking water by the hand-pump outside the pantry door. (At Mecosta, that pump still functions—the only one in the village still in use.)

It was no easy life, for farmer, farmer's wife, or farmer's progeny. Although not plaintive, Jager offers an instance:

> I look at the summer of 1942: my mother had four children under fourteen; she had no indoor plumbing, no electricity, no refrigeration; and she was pregnant, hemming diapers in her spare time. To keep washing, cooking, ironing, sewing, cleaning, and mothering from becoming overwhelming, she sometimes had help on Wednesday or Thursday afternoon from my cousin Gertrude, and that gave her a midweek break to attend meetings of the church Ladies Aid Society or the neighborhood Home Extension group.

Yet it was a life of many modest satisfactions, healthy, innocent enough—and of independence. Nobody grew soft-brained watching television; boys then read books; indeed, they bought books. How did they contrive to pay for books? Why, Father paid his sons, when they pumped water for the animals, the garden, and the family, a penny for every 333 strokes of the pump-handle: at a thousand strokes a day, the minimum permitted, a lad could earn nearly a dollar a month.

Ronald Jager's son does not pump, nor read the sort of books the father read; the son "has not had the advantages of certain deprivations." Jager comments on this in a passage as wisely moving as Gissing's *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* or Alexander Smith's *Dreamthrop*:

> It's my fancy, or literary conceit, that there are mythic streams of human consciousness that you can best tap into if you know the special feel of blisters earned from a pump handle. Be that right or wrong, it is a fact that our literary culture, from the Bible to Robert Frost and T.S. Eliot, is alive with springs of water as symbols of life and spirit. [Young Jager bought Verne's *Mysterious Island* with pump-money.]
>
> So, we continue drawing from old wells. We keep the experience of certain privileged books, like sounds of sighing windmills turning, safely stored in memory. We linger to savor the luminous hoarfrost that wraps the brittle morning farm with meaning, like memory of mist frozen, and keep watching the night sky for blazing rocks, aware, reluctantly, that there are more rocks up there than balloons. We still rely on unseen angels to keep us from the edge. It's a mysterious island, this earth, this life.

The reality of the pump-handle and the fantasy of Jules Verne conducted Ronald Jager into young manhood: he writes of that process with skill and affection. The eighty-acre farms, most of them, have been absorbed into larger holdings nowadays, or else lie derelict, and Jager himself dwells in New Hampshire. But if latter-day Detroit is the alternative to those stubborn eighty acres and the frozen pump-handle in winter—why, give us again the deprivations of Missaukee County.

Russell Kirk's most recent book is The Conservative Constitution. *He lives in Mecosta, Michigan.*

Much in Little

by Katherine Dalton

Harlan Hubbard: Life and Work
by Wendell Berry
Lexington: University Press of Kentucky; 108 pp., $23.00

Shantyboat on the Bayous
by Harlan Hubbard
Lexington: University Press of Kentucky; 141 pp., $19.95

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When Harlan Hubbard and his wife, Anna, set themselves adrift on the Ohio in late 1946 in a homemade shantyboat, they began not only a five-year river adventure but a way of life together that was as distinctive as it was unmodern. In his memoir of that trip, *Shantyboat: A River Way of Life*, first published in 1953, Hubbard wrote: "I had no theories to prove. I merely wanted to try living by my own hands, independent as far as possible from a system of divison of labor in which the participant loses most of the pleasure of making and growing things for himself. . . . I wanted to do as much as I could for myself, because I had already realized from partial experience the inexpressible joy of so doing."

Born in 1900 in Bellevue, Kentucky, Hubbard grew up there and then in New York City, in the years after his father died, returning to his home state to work as an odd-jobs man and a day laborer. His free time went to music, his journal, canoe trips and especially painting, though he was unable to make anything of a success at it, and in general he would have been counted by most of the world as an unsuccessful man when at the age of 43 he married Anna Eikenhout, herself 41, a librarian at the Cincinnati Public Library. It was she, a city girl, who suggested they start on his much-dreamed-of trip by shantyboat. They lived by barter, gardening, fishing, and foraging on their way down the Ohio, and when they met up with a mystified census taker on a Louisiana bayou in 1950, it was with guilt that Hubbard let the man believe his own suggestion of a yearly income of $500. "How many years was it since I had sold that picture for seventy-five dollars?" Hubbard records himself as thinking. But already

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the simplicity of their life together was unclassifiable.

Their subsequent trip along the Intracoastal Waterway in Louisiana is chronicled in *Shantyboat on the Bayous*, an unpublished manuscript Hubbard left on his death in 1986 that the University Press of Kentucky has just published. It takes up where *Shantyboat* left off in New Orleans and tells more stories of traveling, and like *Shantyboat* is made up of a wealth of details about daily living and people met, with an occasional striking and moving passage that conveys the depth of feeling of this very reserved man. (Hubbard's best known book is the story of his and Anna's later years in Kentucky, where they settled in a house they built themselves: *Payne Hollow*, published in 1974 when the back-to-the-land movement had caught up with them.)

Wendell Berry has written part biography, part appreciation for a man he came to know in July 1964, when on a canoe trip Berry literally stumbled upon the Hubbards' home. Also a Kentuckian, perhaps as well-known for his conservation work as for his poetry, Berry is as interested as Hubbard was in living a good life, not just describing it on the page, and he is as conscious as Hubbard that "No accomplishment can offset bad living." For a man who has left so much autobiographical material the job is to fill in the blank spots and clarify, which Berry has done very well. Citing the above aphorism, Berry points out with perfect understanding that "It is this belief, and not his dwelling place or way of life, that identifies Harlan as unmodern."

Yet it is the unfashionableness of the Hubbards' life—without electricity and for many years without running water, as much as possible without cash money, which Hubbard disliked; a life they maintained together despite the fact that the grain of their society ran the other way, and despite their friends' well-meaning arguments in favor of, say, some labor-saving tool such as a power saw—that makes Hubbard's books such a pleasure to read. He understood clearly what most of us register dimly as irritation at our fax machine or telephone: that labor-saving devices eat up our time, first by their expense, then by their insistence on being accommodated now, or fixed, and finally by their invasion (like the telephone) of our privacy. Harlan Hubbard did not much like his little inboard motor, made necessary by the still water of the bayous, because he felt a slave to it, and he was exactly right.

One of Berry's very good discussions of Hubbard's thinking concerns his faith, for in places he sounds Christian, in others anti-Christian. Pointing to one passage in which Hubbard celebrates the coming afterlife, of which he seems so sure, and then to another in which he welcomes the coming nothingness, of which he also seems certain, Berry writes, "The two assertions are inconsistent with each other, but they are not, taken together, inconsistent with the life of faith in this world"—a piece of profound common sense that characterizes all of his comments on Hubbard.

Hubbard has often been compared to Thoreau—whom he in fact admired greatly and read with care—and here again Berry has put his finger on the differences: Hubbard's is a much plainer style, much homier and much more concerned with daily living. But the greatest difference, as Berry points out, is that "whereas Thoreau went into the woods for two years, the Hubbards went for more than forty." Nor were they interested in Thoreau's brand of Yankee asceticism. Their diet was more varied than, probably, yours and mine; they played daily their much-loved Bach and Brahms; they read French and German and a wide variety of books. While living an isolated life they were not hermits; on the bayou trip they mailed one December 175 Christmas cards from Patterson, Louisiana. They did not seek poverty or, like a more modern variety of Thoreau-follower, think that the sole way to live in harmony with the natural world around us is to take only pictures and leave only footprints. What they were interested in was self-sufficiency and the independence of mind which comes with it—that more than anything.

Hubbard thought at one time of naming his shantyboat "Multo in Parvo"—"much in little." It would have been a good name for a boat so cannily compact as theirs: they carried canned food, clothing, and other necessities, plus painting supplies, books, even a cello, a viola, and a violin, all stored out of sight and safe away. Much in little is also a phrase that could describe their life. Berry is careful not to idealize the Hubbards: they were not always happy, and their way of living was not without discomfort and trouble and its share of danger. "One never knows, and must always be alert," Hubbard wrote of shantyboat life and the constant necessity of watching the weather and water; and it was a sharp disappointment to him that his painting was never recognized. But he and Anna were, apparently, largely content, and happy in the classical sense. We should all be so lucky.

Katherine Dalton is managing editor of Chronicles.

LIBERAL ARTS

HEY, BABE, MY NAME'S OLAF

A thirty-two-year-old Baltimore man suddenly began speaking with a Scandinavian accent after suffering a stroke last spring. The condition lasted for six weeks. "He was pretty clear; everyone who heard him said he sounded Scandinavian or Nordic," said Dr. Dean Tippett to the Associated Press. The man's condition has been called the "foreign accent syndrome," a rare condition caused when a brain malfunction produces speech alterations that sound like a foreign accent. The best known case of this syndrome was reported in 1947, when a thirty-year-old Norwegian began sounding German after being struck by shrapnel from a Nazi air raid. The Baltimore man told the press that he hoped his newly acquired accent would help him pick up women.

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Letter From the Lower Right

by John Shelton Reed

Locally Owned and Operated

◆

How about three news items from a typical week in a Southern university town (Chapel Hill, May 1990), just to get the old motor warmed up after last month's absence?

> A new law against urinating on the sidewalks resulted in a dozen arrests, nearly all of them beer-drinking students too pressed to wait or too drunk to care. Formerly such revelers were charged with "littering"—a nice euphemism, I always thought, but I guess the Age of Euphemism is over.
>
> The School Board lowered the required grade average for admission to the high school Honor Society, to provide "a level playing field" for all students. One board member observed that "black students might not have an equal chance at society membership because of peer pressure to do poorly in school."
>
> A new yuppie muffin shop opened—a chain operation. Unless I grossly underestimate the local muffin hunger it should drive the old, locally-owned yuppie muffin shop out of business. That's what happened with the premium ice cream shops and the frozen yogurt places. And a locally-owned book shop was recently kicked out of the mall to make space for B. Dalton, which (we were told) would make the mall more easily valued when the owner wants to sell. Thus, man, born free, is found everywhere in chains. (Sorry.)

About that last item: it turns out that the mall's present owner is the pension fund of KLM Royal Dutch Airlines—which gives me a theme for this month's tirade. It's no secret that some of my colleagues at *Chronicles* are given to ranting about foreign ownership of U.S. enterprises; let's take that logic one step farther.

First of all, though, let me make it clear that I'm not knocking outside investment in underdeveloped economies. I grew up in what amounted to a branch-factory company town in East Tennessee, and our Eastman Kodak plant was certainly good for local pocketbooks. If it didn't contribute a hell of a lot to the community other than some noxious fumes and several thousand jobs—well, the people who had those jobs contributed greatly, and without Eastman there wouldn't have been much of a community in the first place.

But Eastman built that factory and created those jobs. That's a different proposition from what has been going on lately in North Carolina, where outside corporations have been grabbing up existing enterprises, more often than not destroying jobs, or at least moving them somewhere else, in the process. Recently Morgan Stanley looted Burlington Industries so shamelessly that even the *Wall Street Journal* was shocked. Once-proud Liggett and Myers is now owned by a British outfit that runs it almost as an afterthought—and ghost factories in downtown Durham are the result. After RJR merged with Nabisco the insufferable CEO of the new enterprise moved its headquarters from bucolic Winston-Salem to the fleshpots of Atlanta, allegedly because his wife found us Tar Heels insufficiently urbane. And homely old Piedmont Airlines, also formerly of Winston-Salem, got itself bought by USAir; now its headquarters are in Pittsburgh, its flight attendants all sound as if they grew up in Cleveland, and its in-flight magazine no longer carries inspirational articles by Methodist bishops.

I'm agnostic on the economic aspects of these deals—although I can't believe they're good for North Carolina. But the cultural and civic consequences are surely dismal. Private philanthropists and middle-sized corporations with local ties tend to spend their money near to home, and often in admirable ways. No citizen of North Carolina can be indifferent to the benefactions of the state's great textile and tobacco families. When their money got old enough, these folks showed as much noblesse oblige as anyone could ask. Besides, they lived in the state and had an interest in North Carolina's welfare and its reputation. But does anyone suppose that the managements of Morgan Stanley or RJR Nabisco give a damn about North Carolina's churches and hospitals and universities and public libraries? How can we rely on private philanthropy—and restrict the Arts Endowment to commissioning equestrian statues of dead generals—when all the philanthropists have left town?

The problem with these megaconglomerates is that they tend to replace the community-oriented philanthropy of provincial corporations and private capitalists with centrally determined do-good policies that address whatever the fashionable cause du jour may be. For example, I've got a copy here of something called "Making a Difference," a "Social Responsibility Report" for Time Warner, the corporate result of the recent takeover of Time, Inc. by Warner Communications. The pamphlet seems to define social responsibility as a matter of trendy environmental concern and sensitivity to politically correct pressure groups. Prominently listed among the compa-

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ny's contributions to the commonweal are putting "safe sex" leaflets in albums by Warner Bros. artists Madonna, Lou Reed, and the B-52's, and allowing Madonna to appear at "Don't Bungle the Jungle," a rain forest benefit concert.

Now, I've got more than incidental interest in what Time Warner is up to, because five or six years ago Time, Inc. bought Southern Progress Corporation, publishers of *Southern Living*, the fabulously successful house-and-garden magazine that I've mentioned before in these letters. Some of us never did like the idea that the largest-circulation Southern periodical now reports to New York, and this pamphlet makes me even more suspicious. "The broad agenda for Time Warner's community investments is set at corporate headquarters," it begins, and of course that's so: you can't let individual field commanders declare their own wars. But there goes *Southern Living*'s special relationship to its hometown of Birmingham, which has helped to make that city one of the few that gets more pleasant each time I visit. That relationship now survives only by permission of Time Warner headquarters.

So far I don't think the change of ownership has been reflected in the magazine's content, but the signs aren't promising. Consider the new "editor-in-chief" Time Warner recently sent to Birmingham to oversee all of Southern Progress Corporation's publishing ventures.

First, let me say that it's not her fault that she's a native of New Jersey. Just because someone was born in a stable it doesn't mean he's a horse (as the Duke of Wellington growled when someone referred to his Irish birth). For all I know this lady may be as Southern as kudzu—which, after all, came from Japan not that long ago.

And we probably shouldn't hold it against her that her last job was president of Gannett News Services, which gives us *USA Today*—I mean, it's a living. When she was chosen along with Patricia Schroeder and Phil Donahue for something called a Trailblazer Award (for "significantly altering the lives of all women")—well, it might have hurt somebody's feelings if she'd turned it down. And she probably couldn't help it that *Washingtonian* magazine named her as one of the hundred most powerful women in D.C. Somebody's got to do it.

But she *didn't have to mention all this stuff in her official bio, damn it*! I mean, I would have understood if she'd just *left it out*. We all have dirty little secrets, and *I didn't want to know this*!

Sorry. Completely uncalled for. Beg your pardon. But I haven't felt this way since I learned that a New York company owns Rebel Yell whiskey. Yankee buy-outs of our tobacco and textile companies are one thing, but our identity is a different matter. Excuse me for sounding like a French Minister of Culture, but it's scary to think that my friends at *Southern Living* now work for the same bosses as Madonna.

I hope I'm wrong, but keep an eye on *Southern Living*. If all this means a few public service ads for environmental causes—well, there's nothing wrong with that. But if it means propaganda for safe sex, watch out. Southerners know there's no such thing. Any country music fan can tell you that.

John Shelton Reed writes from Chapel Hill, North Carolina, as a rule, and supports domestic content legislation for the South.

REFLECTIONS ON THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

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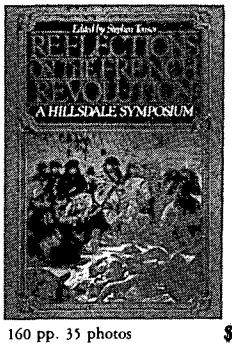

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Letter From the Heartland

by Jane Greer

I'm From the Government and I'm Here to Help

◆

Leo Widicker farms outside Bowdon, North Dakota. Last winter, Widicker had a quarter section—160 acres—that was badly wind-eroded from several dry summers and snowless winters during which there was no ground cover. Much of the topsoil had blown into a highway ditch. In May, a hopeful Widicker planted that quarter section in wheat.

A crew came to clear Widicker's topsoil out of the ditch and haul it three miles away. After they'd hauled forty truckloads without making a dent in the accumulation, the crew chief, a friend, asked Widicker if there weren't some closer place to dump the dirt. Widicker's wheat crop was up about four inches, so the crew chief didn't want to just blade the dirt back up onto the field.

Then Widicker remembered a little slough, about two-tenths of an acre, in the northwest corner of the quarter, right up against the highway. Nothing had ever grown there. It seemed like the perfect place to put the dirt, and he even said he'd help. He brought his tractor down that night and worked the dirt for a couple of hours, and then came back the next day to work with the crew.

Dave DeWald, with the Bismarck office of the Soil Conservation Service (SCS), an arm of the USDA, had been in the area and observed the filling of the slough. The next day he talked with Widicker, telling him that he had in effect "converted" his wetland. The 1985 Food Security Act says that a commodity crop may not be planted in a converted wetland, and "converted" means "manipulated in any way." Wi-

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dicker wasn't in trouble yet, DeWald told him, but he would be if he planted a cereal crop on the land, which would be a violation of the "Swampbuster" act. According to DeWald, the local conservationist also talked to Widicker, reiterating that grass seed on the converted wetland would be okay, but that even a nurse crop, or cover crop, in the grass seed would count as a commodity crop and would be a violation. Widicker seems to have agreed to the stipulation.

He was serious about seeding that fresh dirt, though, before it blew away again, and the ditch, too, the more he thought about it—but the crew didn't have a seed drill. Widicker happened to have one, and also some grass seed mix that included a little barley. Barley is a common cover, used to protect unmaintained grass from harsh sun and wind as it gets a roothold in the soil. Widicker himself seeded the highway ditches and then turned to his little patch of slough.

Well, that barley did him in. When it was discovered, the SCS informed the ASCS (Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, another USDA arm), which has little flexibility in the penalties it must impose. The ASCS informed Widicker that he would have to give back the $7,300 in commodity price supports they had already given him (plus $225 in interest), that he would not receive the remaining $12,500 that he had been promised, and that any Farm Home Administration loans he had might be endangered, along with his Federal Crop Insurance.

Widicker appealed to the local ASCS board in Fessenden, fifteen miles north. His protest was predictable—that he had never intended to *harvest* the barley, as the rest of the field was in wheat, and that in including it in the mix he had simply been following the USDA's long-standing, ecologically sound prescription to include a nurse crop with grass that won't receive much maintenance. According to him, the local board sympathized, but still, Congress had made the law and Widicker had broken it. There was no turning back.

Then Widicker went to the ASCS office and got them to appraise his little former slough. They found the barley there so sparse that it would have produced only twelve-hundredths of a bushel per acre, and the little patch of wetland would produce slightly less than a quart of barley.

Now, maybe there's no moral here, except that the government never kids around, and Leo Widicker should have known that. There are also some who find modern farm programs, in their pachydermal incomprehensibility, laughable, and perhaps those people are right—perhaps farmers *don't* deserve special aid, any more than other artifacts of American culture, such as Avon ladies and Good Humor men. There are some who might say that Leo Widicker didn't *lose* any money, he just didn't get all the government handouts he'd counted on, and they may be right.

But there is a farm program, farmers have learned to count on it, and it hit Leo Widicker with a nuclear flyswatter. Dave DeWald admits that the penalties are too stiff. He says that in the 1990 farm bill Congress will attempt to pro-rate the violations, make the punishment fit the crime, so to speak. For now, though, that barley Leo Widicker may have planted knowing he was breaking the law but planted because he's a conscientious husbandman—that quart of barley, about enough to make a pot of soup—may cost him his farm.

Jane Greer writes from Bismarck, North Dakota, where she is editor of Plains Poetry Journal.

Letter From Paris

by Curtis Cate

The Grand Illusion

◆

Twenty years from now, when future historians look back at the 1980's, some of them may be tempted to call it the "Decade of the Grand Illusion." For not since *les années folles*, as the French still call the giddy 1920's, has the Western world lived in such a state of deceptive euphoria.

The besetting sin of all democracies, the Achilles Heel of the democratic system, as students of history have known since the age of Ancient Greece, is a chronic reluctance to face facts. This unwillingness is encouraged by the perennial vice that lies at the heart of the democratic system, and for which the ancient Greeks also coined a valuable term: demagogy.

Nothing has contributed more to enhance the Grand Illusion of the 1980's than the sudden collapse of the Marxist myth and the dramatic disintegration of the Soviet Empire. This astonishing development caused people on both sides of the Atlantic to look back upon the Reagan years as a kind of Golden Age, not unlike the *Grand Siècle* of Louis XIV. But just as the spendthrift character of Louis XIV's overly splendid reign was, less than a century later, one of the contributing causes of the collapse of the *Ancien Régime* and the onset of the French Revolution, so the fanciful illusion that a country can go on living permanently above its means, accumulating enormous budget deficits and astronomic balance-of-trade gaps, has so weakened the public's perception of what urgently needs to be done if the U.S. economy is to be saved from shipwreck, that it will probably take more than one major shock—like the present Gulf crisis—to awake the American people from a trance that seems to have paralyzed the national will.

Underlying the Grand Illusion of the Reagan years was the simpleminded belief that the United States could go on consuming almost one-fifth of the planet's petroleum output, could continue manufacturing gas-guzzling cars, and, since gasoline was cheap and would axiomatically remain so, did not need to undertake any serious program of energy conservation. Many persons in Great Britain, Holland, and Norway—the three main beneficiaries of the North Sea "oil glut" (now already beginning to run dry)—may have succumbed to this heady illusion, but I think it fair to say that few Frenchmen "fell" for this alluring myth. This is not to suggest for one moment that in France the number of demagogues roaming the political landscape is proportionately less great than in the United States. French socialists, led by François Mitterrand, were a hopelessly irresponsible lot during the early 1980's, and their wild debauch—in nationalizing banks and various industrial sectors—led to three successive devaluations of the franc; but at no time did their ideological aberrations encompass the grotesque belief that cheap gasoline is an inalienable birth-

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right.

I remember, a year or two ago, reading an article by Charles Krauthammer, in which he pointed out that a one-cent tax on imported petroleum could produce one billion dollars of revenue for the U.S. Treasury, and that a one-dollar tax could bring in 100 million dollars per annum—enough, he claimed, to wipe out the federal government's annual deficit in three or four years. To the average Frenchman, who now has to pay close to six francs (roughly $1.20) for one liter of high-octane gasoline, this sounds like straightforward common sense; translated into gallons this amounts to a price of $4.80 at the pump.

What to an American might seem an intolerable hardship has, for the French, been a blessing in disguise. Thirteen percent of the French budget is financed by the tax on gasoline, and this is one of the reasons why in recent years the French government's annual deficits have been relatively small. But the long-term benefits have been even greater, for the high cost of imported fuel has prompted successive French governments to invest heavily in other forms of energy and to develop ultra-modern means of mass transportation that, in these fields, have put France not just years but decades ahead of a negligent United States.

The shock produced by Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait last August was not for the French the first experience of this kind. In 1956, when Nasser nationalized the British-and-French-run Suez Canal Company, the French were suddenly faced with a crippling shortage of fuel, simply because their traditional suppliers—Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia—could no longer ship petroleum through the Suez Canal. The pipelines that now cross Turkey and Syria did not yet exist, any more than did supertankers capable of economically transporting petroleum over the far longer route around the Cape of Good Hope.

Even though the French had by that time begun to tap the oil resources of the Sahara, the dangerous shortage of fuel during the Suez crisis had a traumatic effect on the nation and its political leaders. The first visible consequences began to appear in 1958, when General de Gaulle, partly for military reasons, decided to step up research in the field of nuclear energy. He may not already have realized that one day he would have to say good-bye to a French Algeria and a French Sahara, but he was too hypersensitive about his country's "independence" to be willing to allow France to go on being almost totally dependent for its energy needs on oil imported from North Africa, the Middle East, or—supreme humiliation!—the United States.

Thus was born a state-subsidized company called Framatome, which has since grown into the world's largest designer and producer of nuclear power plants. In 1974, when Europe was hit by another "petroleum shock" (caused this time by the creation of OPEC), France, with only one nuclear reactor in full-time operation (but with six others nearing completion), still had to rely on petroleum for 80 percent of its energy needs. Today, with 53 reactors in operation, France's dependence on petroleum has dropped to around 35 percent—a ratio no other industrialized country comes close to matching.

Although a nuclear power plant costs almost twice as much to build as a power plant based on natural gas, and three times as much as a turbine plant using fuel oil, a nuclear plant generally has a longer life expectancy, ranging from five to fifteen years. But its main advantage, as Jean-Claude Leny, the present head of Framatome, explained last November to *Le Figaro*, resides in the fact that when the international price of petroleum reaches 30 dollars a barrel, it costs 50 centimes (roughly 10 cents) to produce one kilowatt-hour of electricity in a fuel operated power plant and only 20 centimes in a nuclear power plant. Every increase in the international price of petroleum above the 30-dollar level further favors nuclear power. Which is why Leny confidently predicts that "to cover its needs, America will have to build from 100 to 150 nuclear power plants between now and the end of the century."

This, however, is not the only reason for believing that France today is better prepared than most industrialized countries to cope with the world's latest "petroleum shock." The progress France has made in railroad transport, particularly in the field of high-speed trains, has been no less spectacular.

Fifteen or twenty years ago one of America's first ecologists, Barry Commager, was already pointing out that it requires six times as much energy to transport someone over the same distance in an automobile as in a train. Glib comparisons of this kind can be misleading, for much depends on how many persons there may be in the car, exactly how powerful and fuel-consuming it is, and how well filled in comparison is the passenger train.

Statistical experts employed by the SNCF—the *Syndicat National des Chemins de Fer Français*, as the state-controlled French railway system is called—are more modest in their claims. They have calculated that the electric energy equivalent of one liter of gasoline can carry a train-borne passenger over a distance of 42 miles, if the train is only 65 percent full. (If the proportion of seat occupancy nears 80 percent, which is now the case of many high-speed French trains, then the distance increases correspondingly.) The same amount of gasoline (roughly one quarter of a gallon) can propel a car transporting 2.5 passengers (a statistical average used so as not to disadvantage the automobile) over a distance of 25 miles, and the same amount of kerosene can carry an airbus passenger almost 12 miles only. Broadly speaking, and allowing for the fact that even in economy-minded France few cars can cover 100 miles on a gallon of fuel, the energy-expenditure ratio makes train travel twice as economical as travel by car and four times as economical as travel by air. And this is without taking into consideration the enormous quantities of fuel wasted every day by traffic congestion on overcrowded highways and the "stacking-up" of airliners around a busy airport.

Today no Frenchman in his right mind would think of flying from Paris to Lyon—a distance of about 260 miles (or slightly more than the 200 miles that separate New York and Washington, D.C.). For, by boarding the high-speed TGV—*train à grande vitesse*—at a railway station in the eastern part of Paris, he can get off in the very center of Lyon exactly two hours later, without having had to take a bus or a taxi to one of Paris's two airports, with all the delays involved in checking in, handbag examination,

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and, for those carrying suitcases, the tiresome wait at the luggage conveyor-belt. He can do it, furthermore, in any kind of weather and at roughly half the cost of air travel.

Constructing new railway lines capable of carrying trains traveling up to 185 miles per hour is, of course, an expensive business. (Slightly less than two million dollars per mile was the cost of building the Paris-Lyon line, expressed in 1989 dollar-franc currency values.) But it is less expensive than building superhighways, which eat up twice as much land.

Indeed, the experience of the past ten years has shown how farsighted were the rulers of France when, in the 1970's, they decided to modernize the French railway system. It used to be axiomatic that railway companies always lose on passenger traffic and only make a profit transporting freight—the classic example in the United States being the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, mainly used for transporting coal northward from the mines of West Virginia. But France's TGV's have knocked the props out from under this assumption. By the end of 1984, just three years after the opening of the Paris-Lyon run, the TGV's were already showing a profit. In nine years—from 1981 to 1989—the number of passengers using this line increased from 12.2 million to 18 million per annum, and the figure keeps rising.

This is merely the beginning of a long-term program that is to extend into the next century and embrace other European countries. But already today any Parisian who wants to can reach Bordeaux (360 miles away) in just under three hours, paying 290 francs (about 60 dollars) for a fare that on a plane would cost 640 francs (close to 130 dollars). And he or she can do so, furthermore, while comfortably seated in a train that does not begin to shake and rattle almost uncontrollably as the speed approaches 80 miles per hour, as happens on the antediluvian Amtrak trains that ply (plow would be an apter word) up and down our Eastern Seabord. Similarly, four or five years hence, it will be possible to reach often fog-bound Strasbourg, on the Rhine, in less than two hours, without fear of being delayed by bad weather.

Last May, during a trial run on the new line between Paris and Tours, a TGV hit a top speed of 321 miles per hour, establishing a new world record, ahead of anything yet attained by the Germans or the Japanese. But the most sensational and telling statistic has come from Brussels, where it has been estimated that road congestion in the twelve member countries of the European Economic Community already costs them 3 percent of their gross international product: no less than 100 billion écus (about 140 billion dollars) every year. (To which might be added another 75 billion écus—roughly 105 billion dollars—for damage caused by traffic accidents.)

If I have run on at length about this problem of fuel conservation, it is not because I have any particular predilection for nuclear power plants, passenger trains, or state-controlled enterprises. But I do earnestly believe that in these two fields we have a great deal to learn from the French.

The current mania for privatization, total privatization and nothing but privatization, is not necessarily an infallible panacea for every economic ill, and may well turn out to be, like so many other economic fads, just one more grand illusion.

If Jack Kennedy had been the truly great, farsighted President so many Americans still fancy him to have been, he would have realized that a national railway board, geared to an ambitious program of modernization, was urgently needed to pull our country's antiquated railway system from the marshy bog into which it has been allowed to sink. The two necessary conditions for the successful operation of high-speed trains are relatively flat terrain (tunnels cost a lot to build and force engine drivers to slow down) and a high density of population. Both conditions exist along much of the Eastern Seabord of the United States, where the dismal backwardness of commuter train systems—two to three times slower than the French and ten times less punctual—is, in the land of Thomas Edison and Theodore Roosevelt, a national disgrace.

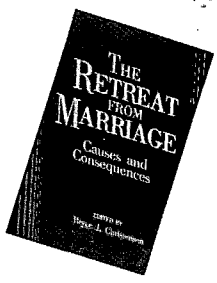
Historian and biographer Curtis Cate has for many years been a resident of Paris.

The Retreat From Marriage

Causes and Consequences

Edited by Bryce Christensen

A provocative investigation of the unprecedented drop in the marriage rate in recent decades, this timely volume brings together papers and commentary from a conference sponsored in May, 1989 by The Family Research Council and the Rockford Institute's Center on the Family in America. The third volume in the Rockford Institute's Family in America Research Series, this book features articles and analysis from more than a dozen prominent scholars including.



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LETTERS

Jeanne Berg

Buzzards and Dodos

George Core (Editor of the *Sewanee Review*) Talks With George Garrett About the Quarterlies

Shortly following his appearance on a panel about book reviewing at the annual Miami Book Fair, this interview with George Core took place in a 15th-story hotel room high above downtown Miami, its boarded-up storefronts and decay, its winos and druggies mercifully out of sight. A quiet, light-filled room with a view of Biscayne Bay and Miami Beach beyond that. An occasional jet gliding toward Miami International Airport. Oddest and seemingly most incongruous of all, flocks of buzzards soaring on the air high above downtown Miami. What brings them here? Neither of us, George Core or myself, has ever seen buzzards in an urban setting, though we have both read about them as a fact of life in the cities of Third World nations.

It's all of it, high and low, a far cry from Sewanee, Tennessee, the lightly populated, 10,000-acre domain of the University of the South, isolated and beautiful atop a mountain, where in a gray gothic-style building the *Sewanee Review* has its offices.

We are still talking about the themes of the panel on book reviewing and the news of the day.

"Isn't that a chilling story about that Bret Easton Ellis?" Core asks. "Reading between the lines, I found that it sounds absolutely repulsive. Yet what comes across in the press is that the wife of the CEO of the company that owns Simon & Schuster is another Mrs. Doubleday suppressing a work as great as *Sister Carrie*, which is nonsense, of course." This latter-day Mrs. Doubleday tried to carry out a public service — at great expense to Simon & Schuster; but her efforts were immediately thwarted by Random House, which to its immense discredit and obvious greed is now publishing this wretched book, which might make the Marquis de Sade blush with shame.

"We are faced with the fact that reading is a dying art. People read this kind of trash, this new novel, *American Psycho*, that certainly is worthy of being suppressed if anything ever has been. We are going to be in bad shape if Jesse Helms starts deciding the artistic taste of the country. I also think we're going to be in bad shape if work as bad as this Bret Ellis novel, work that bad, *isn't* suppressed occasionally.

"It's not really being suppressed, of course; it's being rejected. But what happens is that the word *censorship* comes up and a great many people get exercised. You shouldn't censor art once it is in the public domain. But if you couldn't censor books in some form and at some stage before they are available to the public, then everything would see print in one form or another. The book reviewer ought to be prepared to say that something is rubbish. George Woodcock once said about some very bad book he reviewed for me that it was a waste of good trees."

Speaking of the earlier panel discussion, Core says: "The operative word in all that conversation was 'entertainment.' I would have been happier if they talked about being lively and entertaining, but not about simply providing entertainment for their readers. What a lot of these people don't understand is that book reviewing ought to be a department of criticism. It shouldn't be entertainment or news or something else that is ephemeral by definition.

"I think a lot of people start reading quarterlies by reading the book reviews; then they go on and read the fiction and the essays and the poetry. Some of the quarterly editors haven't figured out how important the book review is in the economy of the magazine — if for no other reason than that they have to get ads. And they have to keep getting review copies."

* * *

A native of Lexington, Kentucky, George Core was educated at Transylvania College, Vanderbilt, and Chapel Hill. He served as an officer for four years (1960-1964) in the U.S. Marine Corps. He is editor or coeditor of some five scholarly and critical books dealing largely with American literature. Forthcoming are *The Literalists of the Imagination: Southern Letters and the New Criticism* (L.S.U.), a study of the criticism of Ransom, Tate, Brooks, Warren and other New Critics. Some years ago, together with the novelist and critic Walter Sullivan, he wrote *Writing From the Inside* (Norton), a textbook on composition. Core has reviewed for numerous publications and was senior editor of the University of Georgia Press from 1968 to 1973, when he began editing the *Sewanee Review*.

"The experience I had at the University of Georgia Press was enormously helpful in terms of editing the magazine. I picked up a fair amount of information about design and produc-

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tion on the one hand and, on the other, promotion. But it seems to me that these are matters that everybody has to be constantly learning about. I don't pretend to be an expert. For instance, when the copyright law changed in 1978, we went to the Library of Congress, and I talked to a lawyer there who actually called me up. I found out what was going on, how to make up the copyright forms, and how to protect our authors and protect the magazine. Other magazines, like the *Yale Review* and the *New Yorker*, kept doing what they had always done as if the copyright law had never changed.

"My greatest frustration since I have been editor of the *Sewanee Review* is that we can't seem to get more subscribers. We are between three and four thousand; and the only comparable quarterlies that do better are the *Virginia Quarterly Review* and the *Hudson Review*. The *Hudson* has done well in the recent past. They were at twenty-five hundred at one point and now have about four thousand subscribers. The Morgans have been very resourceful at pushing up their subscriptions. On the other hand, there's the *Partisan Review*, which doesn't do much better through the mail, but has a very good sale on the newsstands.

"The fact is," Core continues, "we are now living in an age of the specialized magazine. I talked to one guy who has done all this body work—not on me, but on my automobile and my children's automobiles. He does antique cars on the side. I talked about doing a piece about him, and he told me there are three antique automobile magazines. And there are all these other magazines about gourmet cooking and everything else. The literary quarterly is taking it on the chin. The heyday of the quarterlies was probably the late 50's. And there's really nothing anybody can do culturally to create issues and make them important for the informed general reader. The thing that keeps staring me in the face is that the informed general reader is going to be as dead as the dodo in the near future."

We are soon talking about the individual quarterlies, those he admires and those he does not and, as well, features of this quarterly or another that he can praise or criticize. For example, he singles out the "Bookmarks" section of the *Georgia Review* as "a good idea," adding that "the problem is they are not reviewing enough books." He argues that the *Georgia Review* has done well in recent years, in part "because they have held down the subscription rate. It's a big fat magazine selling for a modest amount of money."

He adds: "The *Southern Review* is comparable, but the *Southern*, it seems to me, is becoming more and more academic. Unless Dave Smith turns it around, it may not be a literary quarterly anymore.

"The ones who do what, say, Peter Stitt is doing at the *Gettysburg Review*, running only essay-reviews, are making another kind of mistake. I think you need as much review coverage as you can possibly get."

About the others—to use Mailer's phrase, the other talent in the room:

"My judgment is that the *American Scholar* is a wonderfully edited quarterly and that Joseph Epstein—who is a very good short-story writer and one of our best essayists, not only a personal but a critical essayist as well—does a first-rate job. Everybody in the country who edits a quarterly is envious of his situation. He has forty or fifty thousand people, the membership of Phi Beta Kappa, taking the *American Scholar*. I doubt, frankly, that he has many more careful readers than the rest of the quarterlies; but he's got an ideal situation and he's done a superb job.

"I think we might devote a little consideration to the demise of the *Yale Review*. The *Yale Review* proved that it was not essential to literary life in this country under the editorship of Kai Erikson, who could not bear to bring it out on time. As a result it was six to nine months late, and he finally had to give up altogether putting the season on the cover of the magazine. So you had to look inside and in tiny type it would say something like 'Vol. 79, No. 2, for Spring 1989, published January 1990.' I'm afraid that Professor Erikson is largely responsible for the fact that the magazine has been threatened with closure, not because he didn't do a fairly decent job of editing it, but because it was not out on time. People just forgot about it.

"That's one side of it. And on the other hand you have got a president at Yale who is an attorney who has decided that instead of putting up the necessary money for the *Yale Review*—which is not much money for an institution that has a $3.5 billion endowment—he will, instead, fund a lecture series or bring in a visiting writer or something of that kind. He and his advisors simply didn't know what a quarterly does for a university.

"It's astonishing, really, that a little school like Sewanee has supported a magazine for almost one hundred years. Except for the very first few years when the magazine was funded privately (although by people who were with the university after all), the college has always supported it and put a lot of money into it."

* * *

The problems of the *Yale Review* lead, by a simple and direct segue, to what Core calls "a very complicated matter," the recent history of the *Kenyon Review*.

"T.R. Hummer edited the *Kenyon* for about a year after having been managing editor of the *New England Review-Bread Loaf Quarterly*. Then he decided he could go back to the *NER* and left them, at the *Kenyon*, high and dry."

Following the departure of Hummer, David Lynn was a kind of temporary editor.

"He was never given a chance to grow into the job," Core adds. "Just to hold it together until they could find somebody. Then—believe it or not—I was told that the three final candidates were all from Manhattan. I don't know who the committee members voted for, whether it was Koch or Dinkins, but the fact is that there were plenty of people elsewhere in the country who would have been at least as good and maybe better.

"So now the editor they chose, Marilyn Hacker, says that she cannot bear to leave Manhattan until her child finishes school in the Bronx. Which to me is comparable to saying that you are enjoying having your house napalmed and so you will stay in it until it burns to the ground. The problem is, I don't think she can edit a magazine long distance from Manhattan. And her first issue certainly indicates that. In her initial editorial she is talking mainly about censorship and the NEA and

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about the fact that the *Kenyon* cannot possibly take a six- or seven-thousand dollar NEA grant if it means she will have to censor her authors. It seems to me that censorship is not the real issue and that it's simply a matter of terminology. It will be interesting to see what happens, but I don't think anybody can edit a magazine long distance for a considerable period of time."

Core immediately thinks of an exception to his rule, however: Joseph Epstein of the *American Scholar*, who has a very good staff working in Washington. He also notes that the *American Scholar* has always been edited in this way, that Hiram Hayden edited the magazine from New York. "But this is the only exception I can think of. Every other editor is going to have to be on the ground most of the time in order to get his quarterly out."

I ask Core about some of the other directions taken by quarterlies, for instance the special issues, entirely built around a subject, published by the *Michigan Quarterly Review*.

"In theory the *Michigan Quarterly* idea might work, but in practice, when you see those special issues on the airplane and the automobile and things of that kind, although they could be good, they just don't work out. The issue on the automobile had one very brilliant little piece in it that was about two pages long, but the rest of it was almost a dead loss.

"One thing that goes on at a lot of quarterlies is that people think you can hoke up these ideas and bring in great editors who will be interested in following up on a subject. But the truth is every quarterly has to have an editor, a benevolent dictator—he may even have to be a savage dictator—and he can't just farm things out. He can't just pass his magazine around to everyone in the country and have him do a special issue.

"If you look at the history of literary quarterlies, beginning with Ford Madox Ford, you will see that the editor is the essential ingredient in these magazines and is in general a person who has been a benevolent tyrant."

Any exceptions to that observation?

"The only exception I can think of is the case of Brooks and Warren. Brooks and Warren working together were such an extraordinary team that they made up a third person. You can read their textbooks and you can't tell which one is writing. And yet, if you read the criticism of either man, there is a distinct difference in style in many respects."

Since Brooks and Warren are associated with the inception and the heyday of the *Southern Review*, this leads to some consideration of that venerable and once-influential quarterly.

"In general the way that the *Southern Review* has been edited since then bears out what I am talking about. I had Malcolm Cowley say to me one time in conversation, and not with any malice whatsoever, that the *Southern Review* was two different magazines. He was speaking, of course, of the two different editors—Lewis P. Simpson and Donald Stanford. I think the same thing is likely to be true now with Dave Smith and James Olney editing the magazine."

What about the regional situation, the place of the quarterlies, then and now, in Southern letters?

"Well, for a long time there were two Southern university presses and a few quarterlies that carried the whole Southern literary establishment. There was the *Sewanee Review* and the *Virginia Quarterly*; there was the *Southern Review*; there was that magazine that came out of New Orleans—*The Double Dealer*. The whole literary scene in the South used to depend on the quarterlies and two university presses—L.S.U. and North Carolina. Now we have got a much better situation. We have got at least a half a dozen good university presses. And the South is probably characteristic of the rest of the country in that there are too damn many publications. I would hate to see any of the good ones go. But, on the other hand, if somebody came to you or me and said what do you think about starting another quarterly, I hope we would say it is the most dismal idea we have ever heard of."

What *about* the future? What do the 1990's look like to this editor?

"Well, I would like to find some way of recharging our batteries, so to speak. I don't really know how to do this. I think that a magazine, when it tries to be different, is usually on the way out."

He cites the example of *Grand Street*, which he sees as "now finished."

"It's got a new format; it's got a new editor; it's bloomed with illustrations. The writing looks much worse. It's got the first interview or two in the magazine's history. I think that it's very important for a quarterly to stick to what it has always done well. And I think literary quarterlies essentially ought to stick to literature. One of the biggest problems all of us have is that nobody reads with much intelligence. I don't know what to do about that. One of the essential aspects of the good quarterly is that your readers have got to know what you are going to do. You can have a lively magazine, but you also need to have a discernible program, one that your readers recognize and understand."

George Garrett, a frequent contributor to the literary quarterlies, is the author of Death of the Fox *and, most recently,* Entered From the Sun.

LITERATURE

Jeanne Berg

A Conversation Around Southern Poetry

by Kelly Cherry and Henry Taylor

Kelly Cherry and Henry Taylor met at the University of Virginia in 1960, where he was a first-year undergraduate and she was a graduate student in philosophy. After he got over feeling inferior because the difference in

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their ages is only a few months, not enough to account for an entire undergraduate career, they began talking to each other about their writing; they've been doing that ever since, but specifically, one poem or story or novel at a time. Recently they were prodded into a conversation, carried out through the mail and on the phone, about contemporary Southern poetry. They had never talked about that before, even though they are both Southerners.

Henry Taylor: I took a course in Southern literature once, and came out of it mostly with a sense of gratitude that I was writing in the 20th century. I can't remember a single line by Henry Timrod, and when I think of Sidney Lanier, I usually wonder whether anybody has ever put into a novel a law firm called Habersham and Hall.

Of course the South has been studied at length as a region, maybe more than any other region in the country, and it has been pointed out countless times that it's the only part of the country that was ever defeated in war and occupied by victorious forces. That made a difference between Southerners and other Americans for a long time. It's probably also true that anthologies of Southern poetry are bigger and possibly richer than anthologies of Western poetry or Midwestern poetry; I don't recall seeing an anthology of Northeastern or New England poetry of this century, but it would make an interesting collection, and might be more like a collection of Southern poetry than we might expect.

I guess I'm wondering whether the South's pure size, and the diversity of its cultures, make labels like "Southern poet" almost a matter of geographic origin. There are still Southern poets who use Southern landscapes and speech patterns, but aren't there a great many who don't?

Kelly Cherry: I suppose that we might approach the Southern poet the same way one approaches God, *via negativa*. In that case, it seems to me, the Southern poet is, first of all, somebody who is not a Northern poet. What this means is that the Southern poet is not unfamiliar with the idea of defeat. The Southern poet is not unfamiliar with the Bible. The Southern poet is not averse to telling stories, and may even elect to tell a story rather than expound a point.

I spent part of my childhood in upstate New York, and I remember being, even then, amazed by the Yankee ability to assume an invulnerability, by a Yankee lack of interest in the rhetoric and rhythms of the King James Bible, and by Yankee reticence. Nobody talked with anybody! Of course, later on I found out that in New York City there was quite a lot of talk, but it was nearly all in the form of argument, not story.

(As for the biblical reference, however, I could not have been happier — though, again, later on — to encounter the splendidly allusive music of such Yankees as Melville, Jonathan Edwards, Robert Lowell. Even of a Midwesterner like T.S. Eliot. As it happened, Melville, Edwards, Lowell, and Eliot were not present during my childhood, in the tenement railway flat we lived in, three flights above a grocery store.)

These are generalizations, and as such, trivial. Besides, they've been made before. I've made them before, myself. But what I do think is peculiar — pretty peculiar — to the Southern poet is the idea of resurrection. "The idea of resurrection, of the old made new, the last made first, the dead quickened," I once wrote, underwrites Southern poetry with a sense of gladness, a sense of irrepressible joy, at the possibilities of reformation, *even* in the face of defeat. *Especially* in the face of defeat. (The face of defeat could be de sole. I didn't say that.) This is why, I think, Harold Bloom's theory of misprision — that great writers must figure out a way to misread their "precursors" in order to clear imaginative space for themselves — has found so little sympathy in the South. Southern poets have had no difficulty at all locating imaginative space for themselves. How could there ever be any limit to imaginative space?

Consider Fred Chappell. He's taken on Dante, in his long poem, *Midquest*. Well, so has James Merrill, but Merrill makes a series of points, or rather, makes a series of refusals to make a point, while Chappell goes right ahead and tells a bunch of stories. With characters who have names like *Virgil*!

"The Southern poet," I wrote, "who grows up even laterally with the Good News as part of his daily bread, and who is maybe more than some guiltily aware of the need for it, is likely, looking at the merits of his poetic fathers, to feel not that anxiety which has been wished on him but an expansive exhilaration, a sense of the terrifying possibilities of — not of 'misreading.' Of translation. *In the beginning was the Word*. And in the end also."

I wrote that, by the way, back in the days when I was tenaciously clinging to the representative masculine pronoun. I didn't want to sacrifice the power of the singular for the political inclusiveness of a slash mark. If you want to talk about the imaginative space available to women poets, I'll become positively rapturous.

So what I would say is this: there is something beyond geography that defines a Southern poet. Not that you can't be from Japan and know what it is to have lost a war, or from Israel and know the Bible, or from California, and have stories to tell, but that these things taken together promote an assertive belief in the possibility of, and need for, self-re-creation.

Taylor: I think you're right about the Bible. I was just paging through an anthology of recent Southern poetry, and was surprised at the number of poems that get right to it, very often by way of a story, a recollection, say, of a funeral; the past has an immediacy for many of us. There, now, I've said *us* without thinking, so I have to admit that I can see Southern poets as a group, scattered as we are. I've never even met James Applewhite or Robert Morgan, much as I suspect I would enjoy them if I did. Morgan lives in Ithaca, I think, and that reminds me that a bunch of Southern poets don't live in the South now. We're hardly a Mafia.

Cherry: Maybe that's another definition of the Southern poet. *Somebody who is not a member of the Poetry Mafia*.

But don't you feel that we are at least some sort of extended family? I've never met Robert Morgan, either, and Applewhite only once, but I think of them as literary cousins of a sort. And why? Because they come out of a

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cultural idiom that parented me, too.

Taylor: Do you mean moon pies and 7-Elevens? Faulkner and O'Connor? Blues and bluegrass?

Cherry: Those things are there, though for me they are there on the periphery, not at the center, simply because they were not direct influences on my childhood. But no, I mean the larger themes we were talking about.

Taylor: Surely, though, Southerners aren't sitting around in a daze of nostalgia, as Northerners seem to think. Not these days.

Cherry: Hanging out on the metaphorical back porch of a summer evening, memorializing an Arcadian past. . . . It's true: I don't know anybody who's doing that. Did Southern writers ever do that?

Taylor: I think they did, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. That may make for some misunderstanding, some misreading. I'm thinking of Andrew Hudgins's *After the Lost War*, which came out a couple of years ago. It's a book-length poem, mostly spoken by Sidney Lanier, but the voice is invented, not based on Lanier's poetry. It's a wonderful book, anything but an exercise in nostalgia.

Progress and nostalgia, Old South and New South; there are tensions there still. Take the question of race. Certainly, in the last thirty or forty years, it has become clear that this is not purely a Southern problem.

Cherry: That's true. But I, for one, do find myself concerned with it in my work, though rather more in my fiction than in my poetry. It's a concern of the novel I have in progress at this moment. But, you know, I'm not sure it's a Southern concern. I live in Madison, and the race question currently has priority here. Naturally, this finds some expression in my work. Do you feel it's a concern in contemporary poetry by Southerners?

Taylor: Yes, but I'm not at all sure that Southern poets deal with it more often than non-Southern poets. The African-American poets who are also Southerners have had widely various ways of handling it, or of writing poems in which it is not the subject. I think it's a national question; as such it concerns Southern writers as much as it does anybody else.

But listen: I know you're a Southerner by birth, and largely by upbringing, but I wonder what's Southern about your work. How do you feel about being called a Southern writer?

Cherry: Much the way I feel about being called a woman writer. That's to say, I don't like it, but there are plenty of things in this world I worry about more. I'm a writer, and I happen to have been born in the South as a woman. I have this weird sense, contrary to all theories of biological or environmental influence, that I could just as well have wound up in a different body in a different place in a different time, but that no matter where I was, I'd still be myself. I don't think there's anything mystical about this. I think I just have a very strong sense of myself as, paradoxically, someone able to lose herself in other characters. I could almost define myself as someone who can be un-Southern, un-female. Or maybe I mean someone able to find herself in other characters. . . . At the same time, I'm well aware of being in this womanly body and living in this time and this place. And you? Do you think of yourself as a Southern man writer?

Taylor: Not often. An effect of growing up in a white male society as a white male is that it often takes self-conscious effort to think, "I'm a white male." A complication in my case is that I grew up in rural Virginia, as a Quaker in a Quaker community, and have realized since I was very young that there are contradictions and tensions between those two cultural inheritances. I think those tensions have been more useful to me as a writer than either background alone would have been.

Cherry: Yes, that's a wonderful thing about the South, wonderful for the Southern writer, at any rate, and not only for the Southern poet. The South is a great place for writers because it is so endlessly rich in contradictions. I've often remarked that I think it is very hard to grow up in the South and not become a writer. Those contradictions are so funny, and so tragic, and everywhere. I just published the first book of fiction I've set in the Midwest, and I've been in Wisconsin for going on fourteen years now, and spent a couple of winters in southwest Minnesota. I think I had to learn how to see the contradictions in the Midwest before I could write about the Midwest. They are here, of course, but they are subtler. You have to accustom your eye to them. In the American South, contradictions spring up in front of you wherever you go. What Southern writer doesn't find himself, or herself, practically dancing, doing a dance of pure delighted amusement, on every stroll down the street?

Taylor: I know what you mean, even though I live where there are roads instead of streets. You remind me, though, that the time I spent living in Salt Lake City, in the late 60's, gave me a place to look back from. I wrote most of the more "Southern" poems in my second book while I was out there. Partly, it was a way of simultaneously combating, and giving in to, the stereotyped assumptions some of my colleagues there made about me. Often, out there, I thought of the trap Jarrell describes in one of his essays; a young Southern woman moves to New York, and people keep saying to her, "Whatever you do, don't lose that precious accent!" and she winds up sounding like Amos 'n' Andy. But probably that's an avoidable pitfall. How does the South look to you from Madison?

Cherry: Henry, even as we speak I'm looking out at a sidewalk that's got over seventeen inches of snow on it, just from yesterday. I've spent seventy dollars so far on getting that snow shoveled, and there's an irreducible residue of ice that the city'll probably fine me for. And you want to know how the South looks to me from here? I'll tell you: from here, the South looks like literature. From here, the South looks like poetry.

Kelly Cherry teaches at the University of Wisconsin at Madison and is author of the forthcoming The Exiled Heart, *a narrative. She was the first*

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recipient of the Fellowship of Southern Writers Poetry Award. Henry Taylor's most recent book is The Flying Change, *which won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1986. He is a professor of English at American University.*

THE ACADEMY

Jeanne Berg

Sociology and Common Sense

by Steven Goldberg

The "Common-Sense Sociology Test" made its first appearance in the mid-1960's. The test is now a familiar fixture in introductory sociology courses and textbooks, but in the beginning its exciting novelty instantly captured the hearts and minds of graduate students and young professors facing their first lecture halls—lecture halls filled with a student skepticism that is now only a memory. It is not difficult to see why the test was so popular a teaching device.

The purpose of the test is to demonstrate to the introductory student the misconceptions that allegedly derive from everyday observation and common sense, misconceptions that can be corrected only by an infusion of sociological knowledge. What more could one ask for when encountering students whose naïveté cannot preclude their believing that "sociology is just common sense"?

By forcing the student to realize the fallibility of his intuitions and observations of social life, the test is meant to make the student realize that he has found sociology just in time to enable him to avoid a life of misconception. Its pedagogical virtues are so obvious that no one seems to have noticed what everyone should have noticed immediately. The test does not merely fail to make its point, but succeeds in demonstrating that precisely the opposite point is true: the beliefs of the student, based on his observations and common sense, are basically correct.

The actual effect of nearly every question and answer is to engender a feeling on the part of the student that he has been given no reason to doubt his long-held belief or the intuition and observation on which it is based. The student feels (or *should* feel) that the wording of the questions and answers claimed correct by the test rests on statements that are dubious, misleading, or outright false; at best, the answers only *seem* to refute the important beliefs held by the student, but, in fact, refute unimportant beliefs that the student does not hold.

In other words, to the extent that this test represents what sociology does, it indicates that sociology is worse than a restatement of common sense; it is a denial of common sense. Fortunately, sociology at its best is much more able than this, as we shall see.

The problem is not that this is a poor test that fails where a good test would succeed. The problem is much deeper: the test is based on the false premise that the sociologist's primary contribution is an observational eye far keener than that of the average person. I would suggest that, save for those sociologists gifted with the novelist's eye (who can be counted on the one finger deserved by Erving Goffman), sociologists only rarely make observations not made with far greater frequency, and with as much accuracy and subtlety, by other people. The "average person" has a far greater observational ability than he is usually credited with, and any test that attempts to demonstrate an inadequacy in the average person's observational powers is doomed to either direct failure (students answer the questions correctly) or failure that only *seems* to succeed by using misleading wording and giving incorrect answers (the test examined here).

While his observation of group behavioral realities is astonishingly accurate, the "average person's" *explanation* of the behavior he observes is often woefully contradictory and inaccurate.

A clear example of this is the stereotype. As observations stereotypes are nearly always accurate (remembering, of course, that a stereotype is a *statistical* claim about observed group behavior, not a description of any given individual). It is the average person's *explanation* of the behavior he observes that is so often hopelessly inadequate. It is by providing correct explanations of accurate observations (*i.e.*, explaining why the members of the group tend to exhibit the characteristics or behavior that is observed), not by pretending that the observations are inaccurate, that we sociologists can justify our existence.

The variety of human behavior, the limits our physiology sets on social possibility, the social structure that serves to organize human interaction and provide a template for culture, and the culture that binds and separates human beings—these all justify the study of social reality. This is self-evident from the fact that there is a social reality, and that it can no more be understood atomistically than can the nature of the "team" be understood by studying only individual players.

It is not the observation but rather the discovery of the causal connections explaining that which is observed, that is worthy of calling upon the genius of a Vico or a Weber or a Durkheim. It is only through such explanations that we are justified in denying the widely held view that "sociology is just common sense."

The Common-Sense Sociological Test follows. The entire test and the complete questions ("Q") and answers ("A") are given; however, the order of the questions has been altered to obviate repetition in the "comments" I have added. According to the test, all questions are "true/false" and the correct answer to every question is "false."

Q. Revolutions are more likely to occur when conditions are very bad than when previously bad conditions are rapidly improving?

A. Revolutions are actually more

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likely to occur when conditions have been bad but are rapidly improving. When conditions are bad and stay bad, people take their misfortune for granted, but when conditions suddenly improve people develop higher aspirations and become easily frustrated.

Comment: This is an excellent question. It is precisely the sort of question that the test promises but fails to deliver throughout: it attacks a belief that really is held by the student (the worse the conditions, the more likely is revolution), surprises him with the correct answer, and prepares him for a valuable sociological finding (rising expectations outpace improvement in condition). It is not coincidental, however, that this question and misconception have to do with a correlation (improvement and revolution) much further removed from the student's daily observation than are the subjects of most of the other questions. The more abstract the correlation in question, the more likely that the student holds an incorrect belief.

Q. Lower-class youths are more likely to commit crimes than middle-class youths?

A. Lower-class youths are not more likely than middle-class youths to commit crimes. Middle-class youths are at least as likely to engage in delinquent acts, but they are less likely to be arrested, and therefore do not show up as frequently in the court statistics.

Comment: To most beginning students, as to the general population, "crime" means "violent crime" or, at most, "violent crime and major white-collar crime." The student is hardly going to be knocked off his chair by the fact that for every mugging by a member of the lower class there is a marijuana joint smoked by a high-school student. In other words, this question could achieve its goal of surprising the student (and giving a correct answer) only by showing that middle- and lower-class youths commit equally serious crimes at equal rates. And, of course, it cannot show this because it is not true.

Q. The best way to get an accurate assessment of public opinion is to poll as many people as possible?

A. The number of people involved in a public opinion poll is largely irrelevant. What matters is that the sample should be fully representative of the population whose opinion is wanted. A properly chosen sample of two or three thousand Americans can give a highly accurate test of national opinion; a poorly chosen sample of three million, or even 30 million, could be hopelessly off target.

Comment: This answer is true only in the sense that it would be correct to say that a football player's size is unimportant to his ability because large, but uncoordinated, people are less likely to make the National Football League than are superb athletes of average size. Clearly, when we say that size is important to football ability we mean that, other things being equal, size is important.

Likewise, when we say that a large sample is better than a small sample, we mean "when members of the samples are equally representative." And, in saying this, we are correct; in this sense—the only sense in which the claim makes any sense—the larger the sample, the better.

Q. People who are regular Christian churchgoers are less likely to be prejudiced against other races than people who do not attend church?

A. Regular churchgoers are generally not less prejudiced than nonchurchgoers; in fact, they tend to be more prejudiced.

Comment: This question and answer *seem* to address the question of the effect of religion (or at least of churchgoing) on prejudice, a question of monumental scientific, moral, and political importance.

The question and answer actually given simply reflect the fact that Protestant churchgoers tend (statistically speaking, as always) to come from groups tending, for reasons having nothing to do with Christianity or churchgoing, to be more prejudiced (rural Southern Fundamentalists, as opposed to urban nonbelievers, for example). This no more demonstrates that churchgoing increases prejudice than the fact that Japanese churchgoers are shorter than Canadian nonchurchgoers demonstrates that going to church makes you short.

The important question that the answer seems to address but does not is the effect on prejudice of churchgoing when all other variables are held steady. In other words, one does not want to compare churchgoers from Birmingham with nonchurchgoers from New York, but churchgoers from Birmingham with nonchurchgoers (matched for race, income, class, residential area, and the like) from Birmingham (or churchgoers from New York with nonchurchgoers from New York). It is the answer to *this* question that is likely to demonstrate whether churchgoing has the effect of increasing prejudice, decreasing it, or leaving it unaffected.

Q. The number of federal government employees has grown sharply over the past two decades?

A. The number of federal civilian officials has remained almost constant for twenty years, although the number of state and local-government officials has risen significantly.

Comment: The intuition of the student (and the rest of us) is that bureaucracy has burgeoned. That this intuition derives from our experience with state and local bureaucracies, and

LIBERAL ARTS

PLAY BALL

According to a new "ex-gay" effort called Evergreen, sports is the way out of homosexuality. As reported in the summer newsletter of Evangelicals Concerned. Evergreen recently sponsored a two-day conference in Salt Lake City entitled "You Don't Have to be Gay." Evergreen director Alan Seegmiller said that in addition to teaching basketball and softball to those who want to become "ex-gay," some have found it helpful to seek training in automobile mechanics."

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does not accurately reflect the federal situation, is interesting, but, at best, only mildly surprising. It is the state and local bureaucracies with which people have the most daily experience, experience that leads them to correctly believe that bureaucracy in general has increased significantly.

Q. Exposure to pornography makes people more likely to commit sex crimes?

A. Studies of sex offenders show that they are less likely than non-offenders to have been exposed to pornography. Far from encouraging sex crime, pornography seems to provide some people with an alternative outlet.

Comment: The answer does not address, much less refute, the question. It addresses the issue of the relative exposure to pornography of offenders and non-offenders. The issue described in the question—the issue of the causal role of pornography—is this: do offenders who read pornography commit a greater number (or the same number or fewer) crimes than do offenders who do not read pornography (or who read less pornography)? That the non-offender, who perhaps lacks a necessary condition that must complement pornography if one is to become an offender, reads as much pornography as the offender (or even more) is irrelevant. One would not deny that curry makes an ulcer worse simply because curry will not give an ulcer to one who lacks the other necessary conditions for the development of an ulcer.

Q. One thing that is found in every society is romantic love?

A. Romantic love may seem a part of "human nature" to us, but in many societies it is unknown and in many others it is regarded as ridiculous or tragic.

Comment: The issue raised in the question is whether there are societies in which romantic love is unknown (not whether there are societies in which it is negatively sanctioned). That some societies ridicule romantic love or see it as tragic demonstrates that these societies *do* recognize romantic love.

That many societies do not institutionalize romantic love (seeing it as a threat to social stability) is a point that is true, important, and probably unknown by most students. However, the test question is not concerned with societies that recognize romantic love and negatively sanction it, but with alleged societies that are so successful at socializing their members that romantic love never rears its head.

I have spent the past decade and a half studying cross-cultural regularities, and like many others I have come to strongly distrust claims of the absence in a society of an emotionally rooted behavior that is found in every other society. Such claims are almost invariably made on the basis of secondhand references. When one looks to the ethnographies of societies said to lack a certain kind of behavior (in those cases where the sources are given), the description of those societies makes it clear that the behavior is not absent. On a very few occasions, a specialized ethnography concentrating on an entirely different subject will give no evidence of the behavior in question. However, when the behavior is negatively sanctioned (and therefore not exhibited openly), when the subject of the ethnography is, say, irrigation methods, and the behavior in question is romantic love—and when we know that this behavior can be observed in virtually all other of the world's societies, it is dubious to conclude that absence of a mention of the behavior in the ethnography is strong evidence that members of the society do not exhibit the behavior.

Q. On average, high-income people in the United States pay a greater proportion of their income in taxes than low-income people?

A. High-income people pay roughly the same proportion of their income as low-income people do. The reasons are that the rich can use many tax loopholes and that sales and other indirect taxes take a relatively larger percentage of poor people's income.

Comment: There are two problems with this answer, even if we accept that it is empirically correct. First, if my students are representative, and I suspect they are, then most students do not only not register surprise at the answer, but in fact are surprised that the rich don't pay a *smaller* percentage of their incomes because they can buy lawyers who can find loopholes and because the system favors the rich. Second, even if the students did believe that the rich pay a higher percentage, their belief would be a function of their equating "taxes" with income taxes, not the sales and indirect taxes required to make this question "work."

Q. Husbands are more likely to kill their wives in family fights than wives are to kill their husbands?

A. Husbands and wives are equally likely to kill one another; although husbands are usually stronger, wives are more likely to resort to lethal weapons.

Comment: This certainly is a surprising "fact," one that will surprise students as much as will the "fact" that there are more Chinese in New Jersey than there are in China. These two "facts," however, have about equal truth content. According to a recent FBI Uniform Crime Report, husbands kill their wives about three times as often as wives kill their husbands.

Q. The amount of money spent on a school's equipment and facilities has a strong effect on the academic success of its pupils?

A. The amount of money spent on a school's facilities seems to have little influence on pupil achievement. Performance is primarily related to family and social class background.

Comment: One might question whether the student is all that surprised by the answer. The cynic might have doubts whether the research on which the answer is based possessed the methodological sophistication and rigor necessary for disentangling the factors of income, social class, and the tendency of schools with high-income students to both spend more money and achieve academic success. Nonetheless, it takes only the slightest generosity to give this question a passing grade.

Q. A substantial portion of people on welfare could work if they really wanted to?

A. Less than 2 percent of people on welfare are adult males who have been out of work for several months. Nearly all are children, old people, handicapped people, or mothers who are obliged to stay at home to look after their families and have no other source of income.

Comment: If we ignore possible quibbles about precise percentages, this answer is correct in its claim that most people on welfare are in the groups listed. For some students, the question

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probably accomplishes the test's goal of surprising them with a correct answer. However, at least as many (in my experience) are aware that a relatively small percentage of welfare recipients are malingerers or cheaters. In fairness it should be said that this may not have been true when the question was originally written and, if we again wish to be generous, we might give this question a passing grade.

Q. The income gap between blacks and whites has narrowed in recent years?

A. Despite civil rights and other legislation, the income gap between blacks and whites has actually widened in recent years; black workers are generally less skilled than white workers and less-skilled workers suffer more in times of depression.

Comment: While the flaw here is somewhat less deep than that in the next question (to which it is similar), the belief that seems to be under attack is not the belief that this answer challenges. The strong belief of the student is that a black and a white in the *same position* earn more nearly equal incomes than they did formerly. This belief is correct. That blacks are the first to be laid off in times of "depression" (by which I assume is meant recession; there has not been a depression in fifty years) is a point worth making, but hardly one that will surprise any student who is sentient.

Q. The income gap between male and female workers has narrowed in recent years?

A. The income gap between male and female workers has widened rather than narrowed; women hold few high-paying positions and the average working white woman earns less than the average working black man.

Comment: This is the test's quintessential question. It elicits the "incorrect" answer from — and therefore surprises — the student by introducing a construct ("income gap") with which the student is unfamiliar. It thereby seems to capture and refute the strong belief on which the student bases his "incorrect" answer. However, the strong belief is that, after twenty years of the women's movement, a man and a woman occupying the same position (and having equal credentials) receive more-nearly-equal incomes than they did formerly. This belief is entirely correct. In other words, to the student, the term "income gap" refers to a man and a woman in the same position. The fact that the "income gap" referred to by the question — the average incomes of all full-time male and female workers — has increased does not challenge any deeply-held belief of the student and is not likely to surprise him. It is particularly unlikely to surprise him when he realizes that the "income gap" referred to in the question has increased as a result of the same forces that have led to a decrease in the difference in incomes of a man and a woman in the same position: women have joined the work force in large numbers and, since one joining the work force earns an entry-level income, these new female workers bring down the average income of working women and increase the "income gap" between the sexes.

Q. Human beings have a natural instinct to mate with the opposite sex?

A. Human beings do not have an instinct to mate with the opposite sex. Our sexual preferences are entirely learned; in fact, if an instinct is defined as an inherited complex behavior pattern, human beings do not have any instincts at all.

Comment: This answer commits three errors in two sentences: 1) While the causation of heterosexuality and homosexuality is far from understood, it has for a decade become increasingly apparent that there is a physiological component that interacts with environmental factors to generate sexual direction. I know of no researcher who any longer holds that the causation of sexual direction is entirely environmental. 2) Even if one rejects this and goes so far as to see the issue as entirely undecided, the question is a poor one, for the student feels — correctly — that his answer is as likely to be correct as is that of the test. 3) As is so common in sociology, there is an attempt to instill in the student's mind a rejection of the possibility that physiological factors play an important role in determining human behavior. The first-day student is hardly likely to know that, if "instinct" is defined as requiring "complex behavior patterns," there are still physiologically rooted tendencies and predispositions other than "instincts" that clearly affect human behavior (*i.e.*, a predisposition is clearly involved in sexual arousal, even though this predisposes one to actions whose specific characteristics are socially determined).

A severe critic might add a fourth error: it is questionable whether the term "learned" means much at this level of interaction of physiology and environment; just as the term "causation" tends to lose its meaning, or, at the very least, its fertility, at the quantum level, so does "learning" lose its meaning at deep levels.

Q. For religious reasons, most American Catholics oppose birth control and are less likely than Protestants to enter interfaith marriages or to be divorced.

A. More than 80 percent of American Catholics favor birth control; Catholics are more likely than Protestants to enter interfaith marriages and Catholics have a higher divorce rate than Protestants.

Comment: A scratch single, a long fly out, and a strikeout on three called change-ups.

It is unclear from the Roper poll on birth control whether the 80 percent figure refers to Catholic approval of birth control for everyone or just for non-Catholics. More important, it is likely that the beginning student equates "favors" with "uses," and it is only Catholic usage that would surprise the student. (It is axiomatic in sociology that actual behavior often fails to reflect stated opinion.) Nonetheless, it *is* probable that most beginning students underrate Catholic use of birth control.

There is somewhat less than meets the eye in the fact that a Catholic is more likely to enter an interfaith marriage than a Protestant. Most Catholic interfaith marriages are to Protestants and most Protestant interfaith marriages are to Catholics. Since there are twice as many American Protestants as Catholics, it is hardly surprising that a higher percentage of Catholics intermarry (*i.e.*, that a Catholic is "more likely" to intermarry).

The "fact" about Catholics having a higher divorce rate than Protestants is as astonishing as it is untrue. Protestants have a much higher divorce rate.

Steven Goldberg is the chairman of the sociology department at City College, City University of New York.

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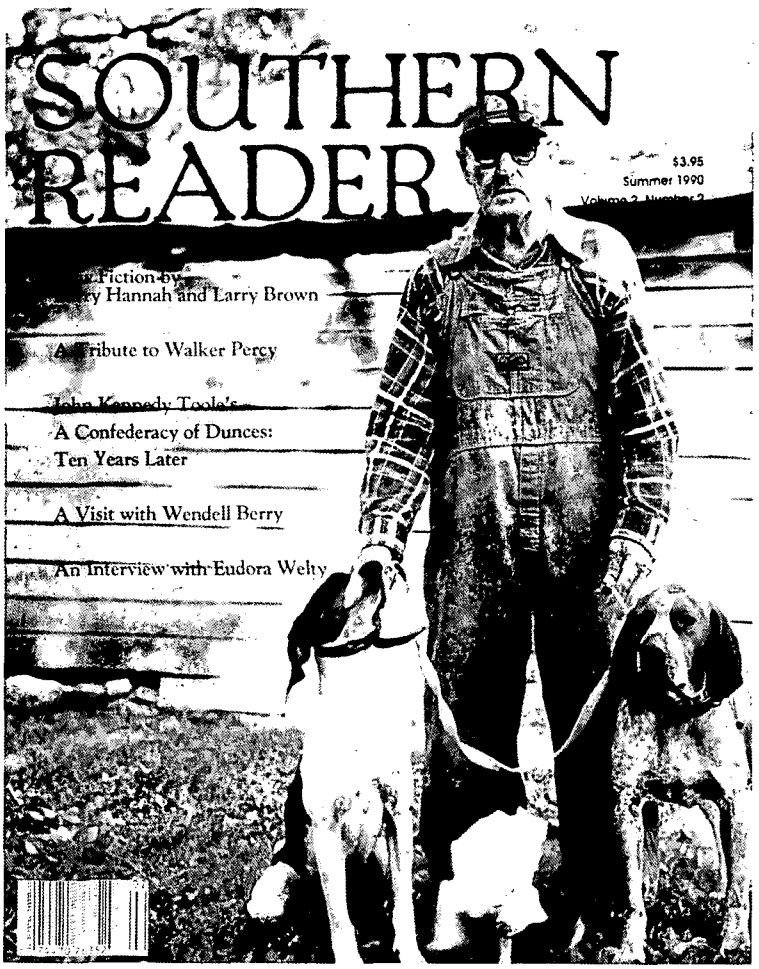

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